A STORY FOR LOVERS OF THE MYSTERIOUS APPEARS ON PAGE 553.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 409. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 31ST, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

1896 PROCLAMATION.

GRAND PIONEER REDUCTION SALE

By Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son, the well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds, will take effect on sight of this advertisement. **Super-eminent.**—The **Queen's Royal** Household **Prudential, Eclipse, and Alarm Carpets** and **Hearthrugs**, to (Reg.). **Amazingly** interesting, instructive, and detailed **Grand Reduction** Catalogue post free, if, when writing, you mention this paper.

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7½ft. by 9ft. " " "	5/11	12ft. by 12ft. " " "	12/9
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9ft. by 10½ft. " " "	8/6	12ft. by 15ft. " " "	15/9
9ft. by 12ft. " " "	9/6	12ft. by 18ft. " " "	19/6
10½ft. by 12ft. " " "	11/6	12ft. by 21ft. " " "	22/6

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Oct. 31, 1896.
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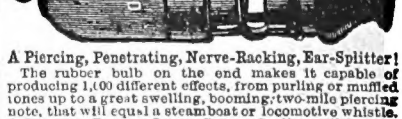

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SHORT STORIES

Edited by C. Arthur Pearson.

No. 409.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending October 31st, 1896.

MRS. BLAIR.

CHAPTER I.

"HERE is the beautiful Sylvia—late as ever!"

A slender girl, in palest mauve, crossed the river lawn, and was handed into a skiff.

"We thought you were never coming," said her cousin, as he sculled her away.

"Did you?" raising her eyebrows, "and you know how I love boating. What a large picnic! Two punts, three canoes, a dinghy, and electric launch. Tell me about the people—anyone amusing?"

"Well, there's Mr. Blair."

"Point him out."

"Just in front, canoeing."

"That type of man does not appeal to me. I noticed him as we started—he stared!"

"Really! very rude, but I expect you're used to it. Many girls would rather like being stared at by Mr. Blair."

"Why?"

"He is irritatingly eligible, disgustingly rich."

"Indeed! how interesting!"

"I wish I had not told you, Sylvia; you're just the sort of girl I could imagine marrying for money."

"Thanks for the compliment to my good sense. To tell you the truth, Roy, I was born extravagant; it is a kind of hereditary disease in our family. I've nearly ruined poor papa with my debts; he says it is worse than having a son at college. There was a terrible scene this morning when my dressmaker's bill arrived; mother actually cried! They say I am driving them into the bankruptcy court. It set me thinking. Life is too short for worry, and I just dawdle on; but, perhaps, after all, marriage might be worth considering from a purely financial point of view."

"But what about love?" asked Roy, leaning on his oars, and skimming them along the surface of the water.

Sylvia bent over the side and glanced at the reflection of her exquisite features.

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"I have already succumbed to the one overruling-passion of my life. I love what is real and substantial, not a dream, relying on the fitful slumbers of the emotions. I want wealth and luxury, to be envied by everyone, to see the world coveting me! Ah! you smile, but I am not joking. That is my ambition—grand, isn't it?"

Roy rowed on with vigorous strokes. Was it the rays of the sun that flushed the boy's face scarlet; or only a clearer knowledge of life than that of the speaker under her lilac sunshade?

"Perhaps," he said at last, "you had better make friends with Mr. Blair."

"Yes," she replied lightly. "I think I should like to know him."

Under the shade of island trees, Roy introduced Sylvia Holland to Hesketh Blair.

A moment later the two were drifting in a back-water, talkative and alone.

The girl was smiling sweetly, conscious that her beauty had already made an impression on the man.

Sylvia leant back lazily, one white hand dabbling in the tide, the witchery of her eyes peeping through long, brown lashes.

"You are dreaming of something pleasant," he said, after a momentary pause.

"Yes," with a low laugh—"dreams that wave before the half-shut eye. I love what is beautiful, and hate the commonplace. This is beautiful," glancing round at the summer scene, while her thoughts added, "but *you* are commonplace!"

CHAPTER II.

"WHAT a house! What a hostess! What a hall!"

The speaker gazed at the overpowering luxury of the *tout ensemble*. Mrs. Blair's friends were taking their leave, and sweeping down the marble staircase. She overheard the remark, and it pleased her well. The thin yet well shaped lips smiled. Admiration was her food—her substance, her very being.

To be beautiful, popular, successful—that comprised the essence of life, as Sylvia Blair discerned it.

"Good-night," said Roy's voice at her side. "You have had your usual triumph, Sylvia—packed rooms, and the most select crowd in London."

The carriages rolled away, the huge hall grew empty, and Sylvia Blair was left standing alone among her household gods.

She loved the dazzling setting that marriage had given her; it was good to be rich and powerful. She thought of it, and laughed softly. Until Hesketh Blair laid his fortune at her feet she had been like a leafless tree.

"What are you thinking of, Sylvia?"

She started from her reverie, and moved listlessly away.

Her husband followed her to a sofa, upon which she sank with a yawn.

"You are tired, my darling," he said softly.

Mrs. Blair shook her head.

"Oh! no, I was only wondering how I looked. This gown is very daring, but extremely Parisian."

"I never felt prouder of you in my life," he answered. "The new music-room was immensely admired. How splendidly Madame de Montesquien sang '*Il mio cuore*,' from *La Traviata*?" Sylvia turned her beautiful eyes upon her husband as she spoke. Something in his face frightened her.

"How old you are looking Hesketh," she said a trifle sharply. "Haggard, thin, and your complexion positively grey."

"This electric light is unbecoming," he replied, with rather a hollow laugh.

"Not under crimson shades, surely?"

A pause. Hesketh's lips were compressed, his eyes had a hunted expression in them which was new to Sylvia.

"Does this life satisfy you?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes," replied his wife. "So long as we continue popular and prosperous I am perfectly happy. What more could a woman want?"

"And if," he continued, shifting his eyes uneasily, "if hard times should some day knock at our door, and we were to go away, Sylvia—just you and I together—to live in some quiet spot——"

"Hesketh!" Her voice vibrated with horror; she interrupted him with a short cry as she pronounced his name. "Why do you talk like that, and imagine such dreadful things?"

"It is late—I am tired—forgive my foolish romancing. Wealth," laughing loudly, "never slips through the fingers of its possessors, however readily they fling it abroad, to feed their friends, and live every moment of their lives—eh, Sylvia? You never heard of Mammon playing such a shabby trick?"

She felt as if something cold and clammy were creeping down her spine. Her bouquet lay at her feet, faded; she kicked it impatiently.

"You are in a most lugubrious and disagreeable mood. I suppose you are trying to frighten me into economy, but it's absurd, Hesketh, positively preposterous. I hope you won't rake up the subject again."

He took her firmly by the wrist, and drew her to the door. Then flinging it open wide, pointed at the driving rain.

"How would you like to be out in *that*," he said, "with no cover to your head, soaked to the skin, and homeless?"

She shrank back into the soft red glow of the great hall, looked at him reproachfully, but did not speak.

"The world is not all a 'Valley of Diamonds,'" he added.

"Except," added Sylvia, "to women like me."

She drew herself up, and her beautiful eyes flashed. The brilliants were shining in her hair, and on her neck and arms. The whole attitude was defiance. His wife's beauty soothed Hesketh's spirit of unrest. He gazed at her as at a beautiful picture, while a proud sense of possession stimulated his troubled spirit.

"You cannot complain," he said, "I have given you everything I have; if I died to-morrow and left you without a farthing, you would have no right to murmur."

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BLAIR was driving back from Ranelagh with Lady Cameron.

"You must scold your husband for disappointing us," said the latter.

"Yes," replied Sylvia. "I really don't know myself why he did not come. I got a most vague telegram just before starting, telling me not to wait lunch. He is always doing those tiresome things. Some men have no conscience!"

The carriage drew up and Sylvia alighted. The house in Park Lane was a mass of flowers, every window sill a

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bank of yellow bloom. "Has Mr. Blair returned?" she asked.

"Yes, madam. He is in your boudoir."

Mrs. Blair raised her eyebrows. Hesketh never sat there when she was out.

She made her way to the dainty little room, so characteristic of herself. The very wall-paper was redolent of Sylvia's personality—a French design of cupids, rose garlands, blue ribbon and butterflies. Novels and fashion papers lay about, flowers and photographs (chiefly masculine) in profusion. Her husband was in the window seat, half concealed by Pompadour silk curtains; she noticed he looked pale.

"Hot, isn't it?" drawled Mrs. Blair, taking up a huge silver scent bottle, and shaking the perfume over her hands. "You were well out of it, Hesketh. Sitting in the sun has given me an abominable headache."

He rose, and bent over her tenderly, an expression of passionate adoration in his eyes.

"My poor darling," drawing her to the sofa, "and I failed you. It was very horrid of me, but," with a sudden break in his voice, "I had business to attend to——"

"Business," tossing her head impatiently, "I hate the word; it sounds so mundane and unbeautiful. I believe," turning to him with a deprecating gesture, "that things have been going wrong—your money affairs, I mean. But don't tell me about it, Hesketh; just put it all right, and do not publish your private worries to the whole world by looking blue over them. Take a pattern by your wife; you never find me moping! By-the-way, dear, I am getting so tired of this room, these tints were all very well at first, but they pall after a time. I want it redecorated. White and silver is my latest fancy; how do you think it sounds?"

He bent his head, and a deep scarlet flush crept over his features; he bit his lip to conceal his emotion. How could he tell her? how nerve himself to strike the blow, and deny this radiant creature the accessories her beauty demanded? The hand of Fate that robbed him of his all seemed pressing with a deadly force upon Hesketh now, in the presence of his luxury-loving Sylvia. He could bear his own misery—not hers. That was beyond all mortal endurance. To see her fond eyes fill with tears, to soothe her silent weeping, and know that this was only the beginning of the hard struggle with life.

"White and silver," he murmured. "Oh, yes; all white and silver, like your name and your soul!"

She smiled, and pressed his hand.

"Dearest," he asked suddenly, "have you ever known any real suffering? Is it possible that from the beginning life has been only a playground, a pleasure garden?"

Mrs. Blair laughed a soft little ripple, and looked down at the jewels on her fingers.

"It would need a bold woman to answer that question in the affirmative. But shall I tell you the secret of sailing joyfully over the troubled seas in which poor humanity drowns, chokes, and struggles on all sides? It is a very simple method, though it may shock you. Annihilate your heart; do away with it altogether; it is a superfluous article, that glories in stirring up uncomfortable emotions. To be utterly heartless is to be immeasurably blessed. I realised this at the age of ten. My canary died, and I sat huddled up on a haystack crying for hours. When my governess found me and took me in, she pointed out the fact that my white frock was crumpled, my pretty eyes spoiled for the day, and that the canary was still dead. I inwardly digested the fact. That governess was a very sensible, if an extremely worldly woman. She used to call me an angel, and buy pink ribbons for my schoolroom frock."

"Don't say you are heartless, unless it is that you have given all your heart to me, and I cannot spare a morsel of it," he replied, feasting his eyes hungrily on her. "You don't know what you are to me; sometimes the force of my love comes over me like madness, and I feel I could sooner kill you than that we should be parted."

He clasped her to him and kissed her fiercely.

"You are crumpling my chiffons, Hesketh. Don't be foolish," waving him away airily. "It is too hot for these outbursts of affection; besides, I know all about it. You are a good, dear boy," speaking patronisingly, as to a child, "and you love me very much, enough to kill me, terribly flattering! Now I must go and dress for the opera, we are dining alone, *tête-à-tête*, for your birthday treat. What! did you think I had forgotten that auspicious occasion? No, only I was painfully conscious of not providing a present, I've spent all my pin-money and over; you shall write me a cheque to-night!"

She moved towards the door, but he started forward with a cry, placing himself between Sylvia and the exit.

The time had come, he *must* speak, though his heart should break.

"You—you can't go to the opera," he gasped. "I've something to tell you."

She saw the beads of perspiration on his forehead, the trembling of his hands, and heard his short, quick breathing.

Sylvia toyed with the mantel border, and looked annoyed.

"Oh! go on," she said, irritated at his interruption.

He looked her straight in the face with quivering lips, while two words broke from him: "I'm ruined!"

Sylvia's colour faded, her eyes were bright and hard as steel, her nostrils dilated, she drew herself up in an attitude of defiance.

"She is dazed by the blow," he thought pityingly; "she cannot speak."

"Sylvia—my love—my life—we will bear it together," he whispered, taking her hand; "we are both young, and I can work."

But she drew sharply away.

"Don't touch me! For mercy's sake spare me your comments on a hopeless, degrading situation. Ruined, are we? Do I look like a woman that could suffer poverty lightly, a drudge, a housewife? Bah! it is imposible. If you have any respect for yourself left, do not talk of dragging your wife down to your own miserable level, and bearing it *together!*"

He staggered back, numbed and paralysed by Sylvia's cruel utterances. That such words should come from the lips he had loved and prized bewildered him. The scales fell from his eyes, and as he stared at the splendid figure drawn up against the brocade hangings of the flowered grate, he saw her as she *was!*

Where lay hidden the tender grief, the sympathy which in his devotion he had trembled to awake? Now that the moment had come, when he yearned for some sign to appease his grief, she stood apart, while the love and solace he expected ended ignominiously in nil!

"What would you have me do?" he asked hoarsely.

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She raised her head and looked him full in the eyes, advancing a step as if to emphasise her words:

"Shoot yourself, I have no further use for you!"

The bald, crude phrase came like a blow upon his temples.

"Sylvia!"

The word rang out like a cry of agony, vibrating through the room.

She turned away, and pointed to the door.

"Go," she said; "I wish to be alone."

He obeyed mechanically.

"You will not retract your—your advice!" with a curl of his lip.

But his sarcasm was lost upon Sylvia, her soul was too bitter, and her heart too hard for remorse or shame.

CHAPTER IV.

She went to the window and watched him drive away from the house.

Her face wore an expression of unutterable horror, not at the idea of the suggested suicide, but of the ruin that stared them in the face.

She still had her youth and beauty, and if Hesketh could be driven to destroy himself.

Sylvia's thoughts stood still; her mind became a blank.

She knew that the future without her husband would be possible, and with him intolerable. She paced the room with restless tread, every moment was a torture of suspense.

Then, flinging herself on the sofa, Sylvia burst into fits of hysterical laughter, which waned to fretful sobs. "He *shall* not spoil my life," she muttered; "he will kill himself, I know it, I read it in his face when he looked at me. I am safe! safe!"

The door opened, Hesketh advanced towards her. The sight of him was repulsive to his wife.

"Where have you been?" she asked, seeing how late it had grown.

"To buy this," he answered with a sinister smile, drawing a revolver from his pocket, "and to think the matter out."

She winced at the sight of the weapon.

"Why do you bring it here?"

"Because it will be easier to die if you answer a few questions—first. Don't lie to a doomed man, Sylvia."

"Go on."

"Did you ever, even for a day or an hour, love me? Was it all the dastardly acting of a hypocrite from beginning to end? Had you *one* tender feeling towards me, a single thought above my money?" She shook her head.

"I had no heart to give, but the sham appeared to content you. What else have you to say?"

"Is it still your wish that I should rid you of my presence? Will you repeat those words which must condemn your soul everlastingly: 'Shoot yourself. I have no further use for you!'"

Sylvia's lip curled in scorn. "Once was enough, I do not retract them."

"I am satisfied," he answered coldly, the blood frozen in his veins.

The table with the silver scent bottle, scattered flowers, novels, and *bric-à-brac* stood between them. Hesketh glared across it at the fair form of the woman he had loved and pampered—the creature who, in her soulless selfish beauty, was waiting for him to free her.

The devil in Sylvia seemed to enter into the man. His eyes glowed suddenly; fresh vitality crept through him. He raised his arm and levelled the revolver across the table at his wife. He was between her and the door.

"I considered this matter," he said quite calmly, "and decided that your fate and mine should hang on your answers to my questions. Having perfectly convinced myself of your worthlessness and treachery, I shall spare, or postpone, my own demise."

"Then take care how you handle that pistol!" she retorted, moving aside; "can't you see you are pointing it at *me!*"

He followed her direction with hand and eyes, the stamp of deadly determination on his features, then spoke in a tone that was strangely unfamiliar to the woman.

"Don't you understand, Sylvia? I am going to shoot *you*, instead!"

Petrified by the terrible threat, the cowardly spirit of Mrs. Blair crept out through the ghastly anguish of her eyes.

Abject, awful terror consumed her being; she could not move or utter, the pallor of death stole over her face and lips, drawn by unspeakable fear. She could only stare with chattering teeth at the weapon, raising her hands feebly as if to ward it off. A sharp, shrill cry escaped her; half incoherent words broke in despair from the wretched wife.

"Take it away for the love of Heaven," pointing at the pistol. "Are you mad, Hesketh? I didn't mean it—not a syllable—my mind was unhinged by your news. I am like that, I don't know what I say. I'll go away with you—anywhere—to the end of the earth!"

"A longer journey than that," he added unmoved. "You have tricked me enough."

She pulled herself together, though the violent trembling of her body was still visible.

"Stop this fiendish joke!" she cried, "have you not bullied me sufficiently for to-night? To-morrow we will plan a future. Put that revolver back in its case, and face facts."

"That is exactly what I am doing, but I have not yet finished with my birthday present," pointing to the weapon. "I gave it to myself to celebrate the day."

An awful pause, in which the worldly, pleasure-loving life of the woman rose before her eyes.

"No, no," she moaned. "I *can't* die—I'm not fit—God knows—*you* know. Hesketh! Hesketh! Spare me—don't send me to hell like this!"

She rushed frantically towards the door, in a paroxysm of fear, but he was before her, still covering her with the revolver.

"Yes," he hissed, "that is the place for devils! Go!"

His demoniacal laugh mingled with the sharp report that shattered the transient beauty of Sylvia Blair's false face, and left her victim red handed in the waning light of a summer evening. Winifred Graham.

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TALKING IT OVER.

Dramatis Personæ.—Miss Nina Moore and Mr. Bertie Fairfax.

Scene.—A library in Miss Moore's house. A wood fire blazes on the hearth. Low bookcases line the walls. Plants and flowers fill the windows. Magazines and papers are scattered on small tables. An escritoire conveniently stocked with writing materials is near the window. A tea-table by the mantel is covered with dainty cups, old silver, and the inevitable kettle. Miss Nina Moore, on a quaint settee, sits by the fire pretending to read.

Time.—Five o'clock in the afternoon.

Miss Nina Moore (to herself): "I wonder if he will come. I think he has sense enough to realise that there is no reason why we should not be friends. Oh, dear, I hear him in the hall."

Mr. Bertie Fairfax (pushing aside the portière): "I have come at your request, Miss Moore. I believe that you suggested in your note this morning that you would like me to bring, instead of send, your letters and—the other things."

Miss Moore (stiffly): "Thanks, very much. The letters first, if you please; the other things, which you so politely name the ring and scarf-pins, I care nothing about."

Mr. Fairfax (handing her a small package of letters, generally minus envelopes): "I did not mean to be rude, but if we are to talk things over, as you said, you should not become cross at once, you know."

Miss Moore (not noticing his remark): "Are these all the letters? I thought I had written to you quite often in the last three months. I have stacks of yours. I believe you have lost them."

Mr. Fairfax (guiltily): "I don't know. Perhaps, the others are. Sisters have such a way of clearing out a fellow's top drawer."

Miss Moore (indignantly): "Your sisters, indeed! Charming idea that!"

Mr. Fairfax (in confusion): "Oh, I did not mean that! They—they are only put away so carefully. I will come across them some time when I least expect. But you told me in your note that you thought it best that we should talk over our broken engagement, and I am here for that purpose."

Miss Moore: "Yes; let us be perfectly frank with each other—the only way to be in such affairs, I always think, and——"

Mr. Fairfax (interrupting her): "You speak like a veteran, as if you had dissolved engagements by the dozen."

Miss Moore (ignoring the interruption): "You see, our engagement was rather peculiar. I had heard so many pleasant things of you from Alice Long that I was prepared to like you from the first. Then you had just come from Africa, where so few people go, and there was a report that you had shot an elephant; you danced well; you wrote clever notes, and sent the most beautiful flowers; and, altogether, I found myself—well, we became engaged before I knew what you really were."

Mr. Fairfax: "Your frankness is delightful. I never knew more reasons for an engagement than you have just given. If it is anything in my favour I admit the elephant."

Miss Moore (reminiscently): "Yes, I do not quite regret the affair, but I feel sure that a platonic friendship will be the only thing for us, and therefore please observe that I am giving you back the ring and watch, but shall keep the books and the silver candlestick, which looks so lovely on my desk."

Mr. Fairfax (mechanically taking the bundle she offers): "What do you mean by a platonic friendship?"

Miss Moore: "Well, you may come and see me once or twice a month. You can take me out occasionally to a dance or a theatre; and if you see me at a party with anyone I loathe, you can come to my rescue."

Mr. Fairfax (sarcastically): "Delightful position! Thanks very much, Miss Moore!"

Miss Moore: "Now you are angry still. I am sure that we can do this, and prove to the world that the mere fact of having been engaged does not necessarily makes us hate each other for ever afterwards."

Mr. Fairfax: "A broken engagement is not as a rule conducive to friendship, particularly when the whole story began and ended so suddenly, without rhyme or reason, one might say."

Miss Moore (wrathfully): "One might of course, be guilty of such a rude speech, but it would reflect little to his credit or knowledge either. Pray is not every engagement suddenly made or broken?"

Mr. Fairfax: "Most emphatically, no. One should not enter into such a state except reverently, wisely, and——"

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Miss Moore (hastily): "Now you are quoting from the marriage service, which is quite foreign to the subject, and has nothing whatever to do with it."

Mr. Fairfax (in surprise): "An engagement nothing to do with marriage? I beg, Miss Moore, that you will explain what you mean."

Miss Moore: "Oh, why are you so disagreeable? I hate to argue. How different Will Barton was last year when we decided that we could agree better apart."

Mr. Fairfax (freezingly): "Really, Miss Moore, do you consider such reminiscences in good taste? You have never honoured me with your confidence before in regard to Mr. Barton."

Miss Moore (slightly embarrassed): "Oh, it was nothing serious! We merely thought that we cared for each other, and found afterwards that we did not."

Mr. Fairfax: "Like your own case."

Miss Moore (very angry): "How generous you are to remind me so often that you made a mistake in asking me to marry you!"

Mr. Fairfax: "I am sure that I never said so. But why prolong this interview? You must see that we are as great failures at platonics as we were in the lovers' business."

Miss Moore (scornfully): "The 'interview' shall end at once; but let me put up the candlestick with the ring, and you can give it to Alice Long."

Mr. Fairfax: "Why should Miss Long's name be dragged into this conversation, when I scarcely had a bow from her for months? And why should I be burdened with so large a bundle? I do not want the candlestick. Keep it; you may need extra light when you write to Mr. Barton."

Miss Moore (perfectly furious): "You are insulting. Take it. I do not want anything to remind me of one so hateful as you are! When I wrote you the note I did it for the best. I thought that we could at least be friends"—(beginning to cry)—"but I find you worse in that *rôle* than you were as a *fiancé*."

Mr. Fairfax (with a man's horror of tears): "Don't cry, please, don't, Miss Nina; I am so sorry."

[Draws his chair closer to the settee and tries to take her hand.]

Miss Moore buries her head in the sofa cushions, pulls her hand away, and murmurs through her sobs: "I suppose you will tell your wife, when you get one, what a goose you think me."

Mr. Fairfax (smilingly): "I think probably she will know without being told. But, Nina dear, you must not call the future Mrs. Fairfax names."

[Again takes her hand.]

Miss Moore (forgetting to remove it, raises her head slightly from the cushion): "Then we can try platonics?"

Mr. Fairfax (positively): "No, darling, we cannot; wiser people than we have tried and failed. We are lovers or nothing. Nina, sweetheart, look at me."

Miss Moore (wiping away one or two tears, gazes at him pathetically): "Then we are—but suppose we quarrel again, Bertie?"

Mr. Fairfax (seating himself beside her on the settee, and securing both her hands as hostages): "Suppose we do, we can make it up, as we are doing now."

Miss Moore (coyly): "May I not have my ring? It seems to be a sort of chaperon. And will you take care of my letters next time?"

Mr. Fairfax (laughing): "That depends upon what's in them. So see that they are pleasant, and begin no more with 'Mr. Fairfax, Dear Sir,' like the one I received to-day. Besides, they must not savour at all of 'platonics,' although I am always willing to come and 'talk over with you.'"

E. Massey.

AIMÉE.

La Force.
September 17th, 1793.

Friends of the Faubourg St. Germain: You would be grieved if you could see me now as I sit writing to you by the dim light of a feeble candle.

Does it shock you, this heading of mine, that stares so boldly in your startled eyes from the top of the page? Does it say that I am disgraced, and do you believe it? If so, pardon me for the sake of old times and old friendships. But in the old times the King ruled, and we sang, "O Richard, O mon Roi!" But now the people, gone mad, have their say, and we must suffer and endure, and listen to them sing, "Ca Ira."

You would ask how I came here. When I have answered, you will say, what a fool to have gone back. Just so. Yet listen.

You know that when the rest of us fled, my brother remained behind. He had done much for the people and trusted to their gratitude. You cry out, how foolish! Exactly. He thought they would not harm him. He was mistaken. They would have torn a dog to pieces if it had borne my name.

They seized and condemned him to death. I heard of his imprisonment and went back to save him. It was unjust that he should suffer for my sins. I came too late. From a sheltering doorstep I saw the mad mob rush past me, and in their midst, on a pike held high in the air, was my brother's head. I tried to get across the frontier and escape, hiding in the woods and under hedges by day, and dragging myself along the road by night, living on the refuse that dogs would not eat.

I was discovered by a vile ditch-digger from Rouen, who, meeting me on the road, recognised me; and, urged to patriotism by the remembrance of what he was pleased to call his daughter's wrongs, he hastened to the village and reported his discovery, and so this worthy patriot, with a score of equally worthy patriots, lay in wait and seized me as I staggered wearily along.

The peasants have become virtuous, my friends, or desire to appear so, and have tenacious memories for former trifles that were better forgotten. A strange time is this when the people are become hypocrites, and we nobles, in sackcloth and ashes, pose for martyrs.

They placed me in charge of an escort, armed with pikes and old muskets, and sent me off to Paris to the

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court of condemnation. I could tell you of things that I saw *en route* that would make your blood run cold, but I spare you. Apropos, this word of warning. If you value your heads, keep away from here, for the people are gone mad, and our blood flows freer in the present than ever did our wine in the past.

To make a long story short, we reached Paris the next morning, and my trial came off without delay. When my worthy friend, the patriot from Rouen, told how he knew me, and ended up his remarks with a burst of tears, it was all over with me. The galleries howled and stormed: "Down, Lamouette—down! to the guillotine, Lamouette!" You should have heard them!

The Judge rang his bell, and the jurors voted separately, and at every vote the galleries roared anew. *Decreed in the name of the Republic, One and Indivisible: The prisoner is an enemy of the people. Back to La Force with him, and death within the week. Dog!*

Picture to yourself a long, low hall with hard, wooden benches nailed to the stone walls; long, narrow windows with great iron gratings hardly admitting a ray of light. This is our prison—I say ours, for there are some six-score of us altogether. Fair-haired girls and grandmothers, courtiers, nobles—all are represented.

The whole company rose and bowed to me as the gaoler thrust me into the room, and a tall, elegantly-formed man with white hair and a face like a Greek philosopher, stepped forward.

"May I ask," said he, bowing profusely, "to what cause we owe the pleasure of your company?"

"The Republic is displeased with its humble servant."

He smiled quietly. "It is a breach of good manners that needs correcting; we are all, I fear, sufferers from the same rudeness," was his comment. There was a laugh. He then asked my name and condition, with the remark that it would be rude, if made elsewhere, but the time and place permitted it. My reply was evidently satisfactory, for he turned to the others and said:

"This gentleman, the Marquis of Lamouette, has had the good fortune to be sent among us for a short time, and I hope you will all strive to make his stay as pleasant as possible. And you, monsieur, will, I hope, take part in all our gaieties and be cheerful and entertaining, forgetting your own misfortunes and striving to make others forget theirs. This is the only duty required of you." He then took me by the hand and introduced me to all in the room.

What astonished me most was the perfect composure, and even gaiety, pervading all their actions. I hardly noticed an anxious look or a nervous movement among them, yet, like myself, they are all condemned to death.

There is one person to whom I am quite attracted, a sweet young girl of some twenty years, with long brown hair and very dark blue eyes. I imagine I hear you laugh. "Up to the old tricks again," you say. You are mistaken. This is not the time or place. Man goes to his death better than he goes through life.

September 18th.

Our life here is a constant round of theatrical entertainments, readings, game playing, and even dancing—anything to make the time pass quickly and keep our minds from the thoughts of what the future has in store for us all. Last night we had a little play, written by Madame Duron, which was well presented by the Dramatic Club. You would be surprised to have seen how well the parts were taken. We are to have another performance to-night. If it were not for the gloomy surroundings, wooden benches and cold stone walls, with their little windows, you would think, to see us, that we are attending a levée at the Tuileries. Our clothes are somewhat in need of repairing and brushing, but our manners, as ever, are correct.

The Count and I have become quite friendly since he took me in charge yesterday. He commanded the French guard at the Palace on the 10th of August—his accounts of the affair are most interesting. I asked whether, in his opinion, the King could have crushed the revolution if he had placed himself at the head of the Swiss and other faithful troops. He shook his head. "It might have been; there was every chance of succeeding. Even if the King had trusted Dumoriez all would have been well; but the King was weak, pitifully weak. Poor Louis! he was a good man, but the hand of fate was against him, and all he could do was to die as a King should."

"I cannot see," I said, "how you bear yourself so calmly amid such scenes as these about us, for you always appear gay, as if there was nought but happiness in the world." He looked at me keenly, and an amused smile lighted up his features. "My dear Marquis," he said, placing his arm in mine, as we began to walk towards the end of the room, "a man should forget himself in times like these, and live only for others. I have faced death too often in the service of my King to fear it now, when I am in the service of my fellow-men. There are frail girls and weak women here, and I strive to make them forget that there is such a thing as to-morrow, but teach them to live only in the present. And they are willing to laugh at anything, that they forget to weep." He is a true and noble man, this Count; if I were a Christian I would say: "God bless him!"

After the play last night I danced the minuet with the little girl I spoke of in yesterday's entry. Her name is Aimée Dumont, and she is of Provence.

"Monsieur," she said, when we had taken our places for the dance, "you are from Provence, are you not?"

"I have that pleasure," I replied.

"And may I ask if you are a relative of Richard Lamouette?"

"We are one and the same person."

Her eyes met mine, and I saw in them a look almost of hate, and certainly full of scorn. She lowered them immediately, and said sarcastically:

"I have heard of you before."

"You might add that you have never heard any good of me; that would have been nearer what you really meant."

"I have heard, monsieur, that you took advantage of the laws—and that only recently. It was a cruel thing to do, and one that has caused much bloodshed and hatred in this poor country." She had continued to keep her eyes upon the floor, but suddenly looking up into my face, added, "I hope they slandered you, monsieur."

I meant to say they had, but those deep eyes, fixed full upon me, made me hesitate.

"Alas, mademoiselle, it is but too true."

"And did you tell the starving people who came to you that you cared not whether they lived or died, as long as they paid the *taille*? I heard this told of you, too."

I had recovered myself somewhat, and answered meekly, as if I were one bitterly wronged:

"In that they slandered me. I was sorry to see them dying, but what could I do? They hated and would not trust me. I did all in my power, and yet they would have torn me to pieces last year had I not escaped."

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She folded her hands before her, and leaned forward, with upturned face, as if interested.

"Why, then, did you return, if you were in a place of safety?" she asked.

My voice trembled at the memory of that dreadful scene at Rouen, and she looked at me as if astonished at my show of feeling, and her face seemed kindlier.

"I had a brother who was in their hands. I came back to save him, to give myself up, if need be, to their vengeance, if they would spare him."

"And you saw him?"

"He was dead, mademoiselle. I had come too late."

Just then the dancing began, but I noticed that she kept glancing at me continually throughout the dance. After we had finished, she bade me good-night without another word, and went down to the other end of the corridor, singing the old Royalist refrain:

"O Richard, O mon Roi, l'univers t'abandonne."

September 20th.

O Sleep, thou that comest to us in the silence of the night, bearing to the heart, weary of toil and of vain struggle, a certain rest and quiet from daily temptations; thou that art a sign and promise of a deep and everlasting peace that shall be ours when the curtain falls upon the comedy of our vanity and folly, how hast thou betrayed me! Through all the night hast thou been summoning before me the phantoms of past misdeeds, and hast awakened to resurrection the voice of a conscience long slumbering. But yet there has been this alleviation for thy betrayal; for through the blackness of these shadows thy face, O Aimée, shines upon me, and I hear thy voice singing softly:

"O Richard, O mon Roi."

Burdened with such fancies, I could not sleep, so I walked up and down the room to rid myself of this vague feeling of unrest. I had been walking perhaps a half-hour, when, as I approached the lower end of the hall, I heard someone call me. Turning round, I found myself face to face with mademoiselle.

"You are restless to-night, monsieur, or is it the cold?"

"The cold, surely; are you suffering from the same cause?"

She looked down shyly, and her voice was grave when she answered:

"Yes, monsieur, but a little nervous, too. You know I go to-morrow."

I nodded thoughtfully. She sat down on the bench just under the window and motioned me to sit beside her.

"May I ask you a question, monsieur?"

"Whatever you wish."

She leaned forward, resting her chin on her hand.

"Have you any brothers or sisters or parents living, monsieur?"

"No; they are all dead."

"And have you no wife or children who will miss you?"

"No, I am all alone. There will be few to care, thank God."

She looked up suddenly, her hand on my knee.

"Hush, monsieur! That word is never spoken here but in jest." Her voice grew wistful, I thought, from eagerness. "Are you a Christian, monsieur, may I ask?"

"No, mademoiselle."

"I am so sorry."

Her voice quivered—seemed almost sad.

"Will you, over there on the bench, keep still? Pity a man can't sleep in peace, and the last night, too. Go to sleep, you, or keep still."

It was the querulous voice of old Hulot, the Farmer-General, one of the morrow's victims. We spoke no more, but sat waiting for daylight. Only once she leaned over and whispered:

"Monsieur, you will forgive me for what I said the other night? I am sorry."

I pressed her hand gently and we both were still. A little later she fell asleep, her head sinking upon my shoulder. I took off my coat, and wrapped it round her, then leaned back against the wall, to wait for the dawn. "To-morrow," thought I, looking down upon that fair, sweet face, "she will be far from here. She will have reached the goal." The voice of someone speaking aroused me. It was the Count; he, too, was restless.

"So Cupid has squeezed in even here," he said gallantly.

"She is asleep," I said; "speak softly."

He came a little nearer and looked down into her face.

"Poor little girl! How much the Republic would suffer if she lived! Don't move," he said, as I shifted my position; "let her sleep. The time flies swifter and the agony of suspense will be the shorter. She goes to-morrow, does she not?"

I nodded.

"By-the-way," he added, "I shall have the pleasure of your company the day after. The gaoler told me last night." He bent over and kissed her hand like the old chevalier that he was, and with a "*Bonsoir*, monsieur," he turned and walked away.

The night seemed very long. I dared not move lest I should wake her, so I sat still and waited. Her fair young head, with its wealth of long brown hair, rested quietly on my shoulder.

It must have been almost morning when she awoke. "Have you been awake all night?" she asked, looking up into my face.

I nodded.

"And you are shivering with cold, and have wrapped me in your cloak to keep me warm; you are very kind, I can never repay you."

"You owe me just one thing," I replied; "you will let me kiss you?"

She smiled and hesitated. "Monsieur, you may, just once."

It was eight o'clock when the gaoler came and called out the names of those set apart for the day. I stood beside her when her name was read, and she never winced. There was the usual silent clasp of the hand as friend parted from friend; sometimes a last kiss was given and taken as they went to their places.

She came back to me when she had gone the rounds. "It is time to say good-bye," she said.

I nodded, not daring to trust my voice.

She looked full in my face when I did not answer. She must have read my thoughts. "Did you care for me so much?" There was a pause——

"Monsieur, you may kiss me just once more."

There was the rumbling of the tumbrils in the court below; the harsh monotonous voice of the gaoler calling out the names of the doomed as they passed separately through the gate. A last lingering pressure of the hand and she goes. The heavy gate swung back upon its hinges, and I see her no more—shall never see her again in all this world, never. The tumbrils creak and rumble as they pass through the street. I listen until the rumbling dies away in the distance. Farewell!

This to Eugène Saint Aubert, of Coblence, by the Gaoler Fourquier. Let him be rewarded.

Geo. W. Ellis.

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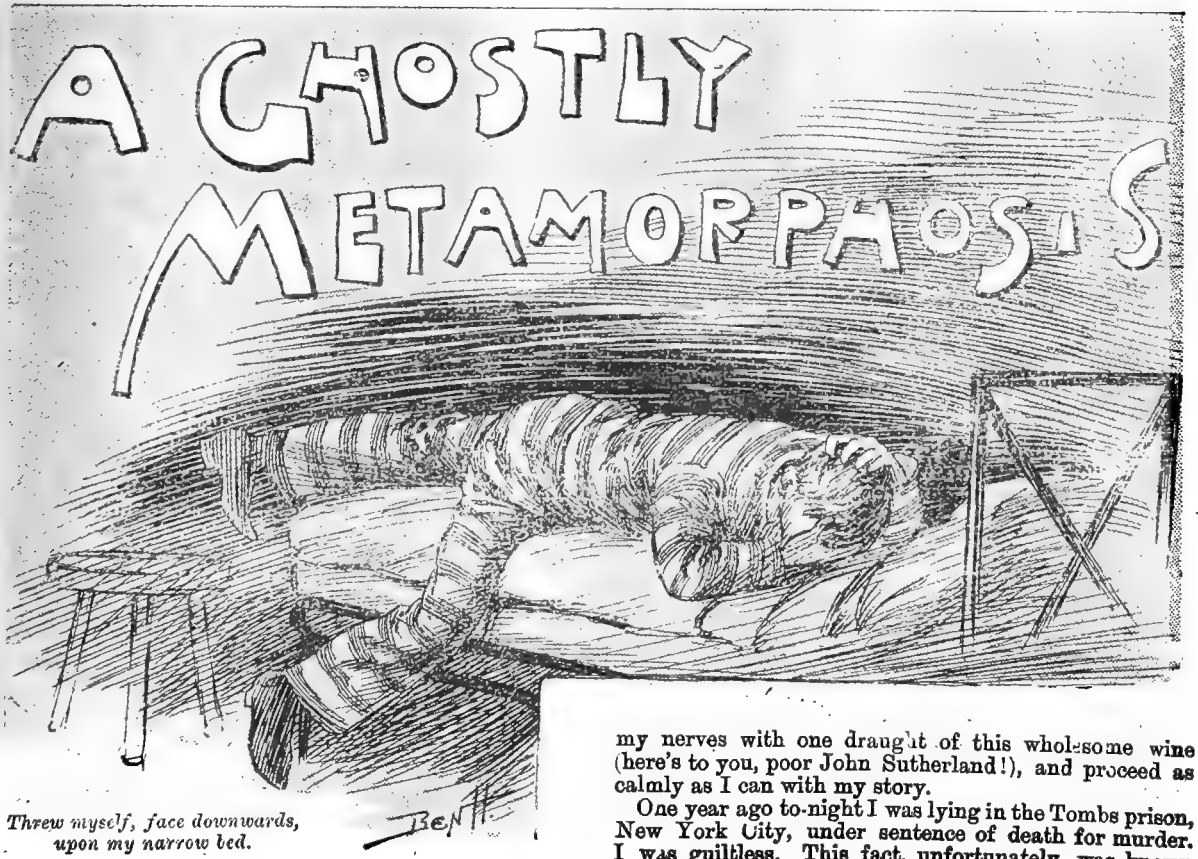
A GHOSTLY METAMORPHOSIS



Threw myself, face downwards, upon my narrow bed.

IF my pen continues to remain a pen, and my ink changes not into blood or wine until the purpose is accomplished, I shall, I think, succeed in giving to the world a tale as wondrous strange as any to which the world has, for many years, listened. There is nothing in the appearance of this gracefully pointed bit of steel and its cedar wood handle, as I hold it between my eyes and the lamplight, to suggest a possibility of its suddenly becoming a serpent's tail or a devil's divining rod, nor do I perceive in the contents of my crystal inkstand anything beyond a superior quality of black writing fluid; and yet for caution's sake, and lest I all unexpectedly become again the victim of a supernatural practical joke, I beg the privilege of prefacing my story with the above absurd, as you will say, provisos.

There are going to be in the unfolding of this narrative, as everybody will discover, several very embarrassing factors, chief of which is this, that although I suppose I am relating certain extraordinary events which have happened to me, I have no positive means of knowing that such is the case. The two of us, by whom I mean Harry Jessup (who certainly once was, and still seems to be) and poor John Sutherland (who clearly is not), are so closely, so intimately connected—soul intertwined, if I may use the expression—that I (or is it he?) who speak can be certain of all things more easily than of my (or is it his?) identity.

Clearly, however, we shall not get on at all at this rate. Though honestly endeavouring to enlighten, I perceive I am but mystifying my readers. Let me quiet my nerves with one draught of this wholesome wine (here's to you, poor John Sutherland!), and proceed as calmly as I can with my story.

One year ago to-night I was lying in the Tombs prison, New York City, under sentence of death for murder. I was guiltless. This fact, unfortunately, was known only to myself. In justice to my memory (or, should I say, justice to the memory of John Sutherland?) I must briefly relate the circumstances which led to that error of justice which condemned an innocent man to the gallows.

I was born (that is, supposing I am the person who, though contrary to all external appearances, I still believe myself to be) in the City of London. If I had parents I never knew them, neither was I acquainted with brothers, sisters, or relatives, even of a remote degree. I purloined what little knowledge I had of the world from the lips of gentlemen at the backs of whose chairs I stood during the breakfast and dining hours at some of the most reputable restaurants in London.

I got a bit of book learning at an evening school, and other odds and ends of accomplishments I picked up at merry places by gaslight. It was while employed at one of these "Homes of Harmony," that I obtained that knowledge of the pianoforte which, in spite of its superficiality, is to-day so great a source of wonder to those persons with whom I am now surrounded. I read more than fellows of my sort, and, as a consequence, soon became educated beyond my station, and I emigrated to America.

Upon my arrival in New York I found work at fair wages in an eating-house somewhere east of Broadway. I was put to share the room of an Italian waiter, a surly, ill-favoured person, who, within two months after I had taken quarters with him, cut his throat while I lay by his side in bed, a circumstance which brought him no greater harm than it brought to me, since on the

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following morning I was thrown into gaol, and six weeks later removed to the Tombs, under sentence of death.

A year ago to-night, at just about this hour, to avoid the gaze of the curious newspaper writers who clustered thick about the stove at the end of the narrow corridor upon which my cell opened, and who (the gaoler having permitted me the freedom of the passage) pitilessly noted down my every despairing movement, I stepped back behind my grated door, and threw myself face downwards upon my narrow bed.

I remember that the cot was covered with a coarse grey blanket, across which, near either end, was woven a narrow strip of red. The gaoler rattled the grating of my door and spoke kindly, advising me to remove my coat and boots, and get a bit of sleep. I lifted my head as he spoke. The blood-red streak in the blanket was immediately under my chin; I had thrown myself down, my throat across it. I sat bolt upright on the bed. My hand went involuntarily to my throat.

The gaoler's kindly face seemed to my terror-stricken vision the face of a devil. I knew that within a few hours I was to be murdered, and he was to be my murderer. I felt that I ought to hate him; that if I were half a man, I would seize his beard, and batter his head upon the rusty iron of the cage. Yet, when I spoke, my voice was low, courteous, even modestly submissive, as I thanked him for his attention. Great Heaven! think of it—I thanked the man who stood at my cell door keeping watch over a stalled ox for the coming of the butcher.

He turned to go. The rage which in my soul had found birth and death without power of expression was followed by a frantic grief, an overwhelming self-pity. I longed to throw myself upon my knees before the retreating figure, and beg for mercy; but again my limbs refused to act, and as the gaoler faced the grating for a last look at his victim, I think he must have seen a smile upon my face, for he brightened, and said:

"That's right, Jessup; I'm glad to see you keeping up a good heart."

Tell me the face is the soul's mirror! The soul is as powerless to control the body as the body is powerless to control the soul. Rage, grief, despair incite to action, and the body mocks them all. True, I am an unlearned and unlettered man, but of the soul's relation to the body who on earth should know more than I have been taught?

It is possible that the suicide, just prior to the carrying out of his purpose, is made acquainted with that sickening, muscle-relaxing, nerve-tightening despair which comes to the man who is to be executed to-morrow, but I do not think so.

In the case of suicide, there must be (and this, before long, I shall fully discover) an absence of that pitiful helplessness which tears the heart-strings of the man who is to be put to death by his fellows.

Oh, the grief of it! The haunting horror of any human form! With pistol in hand—even when its cold round muzzle is pressed against his throbbing temple; even to that fractional part of a second in which the cruel deed is done—the suicide is soothed by a consciousness of an optional escape. There is no time fixed. He is the master of his punishment. The inexorable is lacking in the refinement of his torture.

When the gaoler had disappeared from view, I sank back upon the cot. I turned myself upon my back, and looked at the plain white ceiling. I tried to people its vague surface with heaven's lamps—to imagine it was God's firmament. There were the countless stars twinkling as cheerfully as though no sorrow anywhere existed. Spread out about me was the mighty ocean, foaming and rolling near by, then stretching away like a great black, silent plain.

I was once more upon the steamer—the accursed steamer that brought me from England to be killed. The motion—how delightful!—swing so, swing so. My hands went to the sides of the cot for the protection of my balance. Oh, the motion!—now up, now down! The stars, how bright! The waves!—see, see how high! Mercy! what pleasure! Great tears flow down my cheeks. Crash!—we've struck! We're sinking! My fingers go to my eyes. Rub, rub, and there is again the white ceiling. No stars? I spring to my feet. No ocean? A prison cell; death by strangulation in the morning.

I staggered to the cell door! I pressed my cheek against the grating, and was able to see a portion of the group of watchers at the end of the corridor. Their heads were together; somebody was relating a story. A fat man had his profile to me. From time to time his hands went down upon his knees with a slap, and his sides shook. He was being amused by reminiscences of the trusty gaoler. Amused! These men being amused, and I——

I could no longer endure the sight of my fellow-men. Again I threw myself upon the bed. The red stripe on the blanket had lost its terror. I saw nothing, thought of nothing, but men—crowds of men in black—coming after me. Coming with a rope to strangle me. I, a man like themselves, with head and legs and arms like theirs. They would take me by the hands, and we should touch one another; they would look in my face and I should look in theirs, and nowhere, nowhere, would I find anybody to help me, to save me! Shut up in a cage awaiting the approach of my own species; sons of women like myself; men, with toilets carefully made, coming—deliberately, relentlessly—coming to put me to death! Coming, perhaps, from happy firesides, and waiting only until I should be dead to return to their wives and little ones. Not a man among them but would lend an arm to the meanest cripple in the street; yet coming, coming to butcher me. Could the good Lord, who made us all in a world of sin and suffering, approve it?

I got down upon my knees; I tried to pray, but just as comfort seemed approaching, a sudden, awful sensation, as of the presence of the executioner standing at my back, rope in hand, brought me trembling to my feet.

Again I fell exhausted on the bed. And now a mighty terror of my own body seized upon me. My head was raised, so that I saw the entire length of my figure. It seemed to me to be the body of a strangled corpse. I moved my foot to dispel the illusion, but with the cessation of its motion the frightful hallucination returned. I madly assisted the delusion. I crossed my hands on my breast; they seemed to become waxen, cold, and bloodless. I closed my eyes and pressed my elbows tightly against my sides to avoid contact with the linen of a coffin. A sickening nausea arose within me; my heart seemed turning over in its place, and then—consciousness ceased; merciful sleep had come to my relief.

* * * * *

I awoke with a start. When I make this statement I feel that I am doing scant justice to an extraordinary phenomenon. How do I know that I ever awoke? May

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I not still be lying in a dream on that prison bed? May not the gallows and rope be yet in store for me? Well, if such be the case, surely my supposing that it is not the case can do no harm? You, my mythical readers, will not worry over it if you are mythical; and if you are real, why, then, I, too, must be real and the phenomenon a reality.

I think that I awoke suddenly, and with the thought of the dire business of the morning very present in my mind. It was broad day light—the light of that day I had shivered to think of—the light which was to be a

I put my hands to my eyes.

signal for all those men in black, with crêpe on their arms, to take their victim to the sacrifice. A film seemed stretched across the balls of my eyes, upon which were mirrored a multitude of colours, that now, as my staring pupils dilated, took form in a hundred beautiful things.

First of all, I seemed to see, just in front of me, the face of a pretty child, smiling from a halo of yellow hair; a sideway glance, and heavy curtains of some bright red material parted to permit my dazzled eyes to behold a window flaming with reflections of the morning sunlight. Overhead, my sky was a plane of of brown and gold. My hand, falling at my side, rested upon a texture as soft as swansdown; my body undulated upon a bed softer than any it had ever before known.

It is now a year since the day of that awakening. I have been for the last ten minutes endeavouring to recall my first impressions, my earliest thoughts, as this scene, the beauty of which I have but hinted at, dawned upon my senses. I may have supposed myself in Heaven; but, if so, the idea could have been no more than momentary, for it was impossible for one lying as I was lying, in a position commanding a view on all sides, not speedily to discover that he was the occupant of a very comfortable bed in a decidedly luxurious bedchamber. My little girl of the golden hair hung in a massive frame on the tinted wall directly opposite the foot of my bed. The window through which came in the early sunlight was in a corner of the east wall; my brown and gold sky was excellent fresco, equal to anything I had ever seen in those establishments in which my livelihood had been gained on the other side of the water.

How long I had been staring at these marvellous surroundings I cannot say, when suddenly there came a soft rap at the door, which was on the right of the apartment, and a very cheery voice, the voice of a young girl, exclaimed: "Jacko! Jacko! Are you going to sleep all day?"

I listened in amazement, and naturally made no reply.

"Jacko," continued the pretty voice, "I tell you it's after eight o'clock, and we are all waiting for you."

Clearly the child was addressing some person whom she supposed to be in the room of which I was the only occupant. The rapping on the door of an obviously impatient little fist continued. It was necessary to respond. I said: "Hello!"

"All right," replied the little voice. "I'm glad you are awake at last. Now, do hurry!"

Hurry? Hurry where? I had an engagement at nine o'clock, the child assured me, and a French clock on the mantel confirmed her statement that it was past eight. Where was I? What did it all mean? I softly protruded one foot from the yielding bedclothing and planted it upon the thick carpet on the floor. How warm and grateful was the sense! My other leg followed, and I stood erect. In what was I dressed? White linen, with beautiful scarlet loops in place of common buttonholes—the night-robe of a prince! I smoothed the fabric with my hand, and was surprised discover a roundness and plumpness in my limbs, which I had never before been conscious. I put my hand to my bewildered head. A beard? A beard upon my face which had ever been beardless?

In the corner was a handsome dressing-table, surmounted by a high mirror. With wild, uncertain steps I crossed the room. The polished glass of the mirror showed the face of an utter stranger. Forgetful of the fact that had he stood behind me my own figure must have obscured his image, I wheeled about and confronted—no one. The room was occupied by myself alone. Again I faced the glass. There stood the stranger, with face as white as that of a corpse and eyes that seemed starting from his head. I put my hands to my eyes; the spectre in the glass imitated the motion. I screamed and fell to the floor, the image in the glass disappeared simultaneously with my fall. I had never fainted in my life, and did not become unconscious. Lifting myself upon my elbow, I looked round me.

The base of a wardrobe immediately opposite my point of vision was set with plate-glass. In that mirror I again saw the stranger, lying, as I was lying, with his cheek upon the palm of his hand. I got upon my knees and clasped my hands. The figure in the glass followed each motion. I jumped to my feet, the head and shoulders of the image disappeared, but from the waist downwards, remained. I then perceived that the mirror in the base of the wardrobe was less than three feet high. It was, then, my own reflection that I saw!

No, not my reflection, for I was a man six feet in height, slimly built, with light hair and blue eyes, and a beardless face. The object in the glass was scarcely

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five feet nine, inclined to stoutness, with short, curly brown hair, and a heavy beard. I turned to the mirror above the dressing-table, my knees quaking under me from consternation.

The ashen face of the brown-bearded stranger again confronted me. I lifted my finger to my lips in a dazed meaningless way, and the man in the glass did the same. Just then there came a loud knock at the door, and a heavy voice said:

"Open the door for a moment, Jack, I've something to say to you."

Was the voice addressing me? I stood still, alternately growing hot and cold.

"I say, old man, open the door," continued the voice from without.

Half unconsciously I approached the door and pushed back the bolt that held it. A handsome young fellow, rosy and radiant as from a brisk walk, and bearing a striking resemblance to the image in the glass, rushed in as the bolt was drawn, and clapping his hands upon my shoulders exclaimed:

"Jack, old man, it's all fixed! we're going with you. The governor gave in at the last when mother, Nell, and I all got after him in a body. But what's the matter with you, Jack?" (holding me at arm's length, and peering anxiously into my face.) "You look as if you'd seen a ghost. Here, Nell!—mother! Jack is going to faint."

I have before mentioned that I never faint; neither did I then, though I doubt not Walter had good cause to imagine that I would. I felt the blood leaving my body; I became limp in the strong young fellow's arms as he tenderly assisted me to the sofa.

Placed her arm lovingly round my shoulder.

Attracted by his call, there entered a moment later a matronly-looking woman of fifty or thereabouts, followed by a girl of fifteen, whom I at once recognised as the original of the portrait, grown a few summers older. Both threw themselves on their knees at my feet. Mother (I give the title by which I to-day address that estimable lady) placed her arm lovingly round my shoulder and drew my head towards her own, while Nell grasped one of my hands, and began to kiss it gently.

"My poor boy," began the lady, "you have overtaxed yourself, just as I feared you would, and the anticipation of this morning's event, in the weakened condition of your nerves, has made you ill. I shall be glad when the ceremony is over, and you are comfortably off."

Great Heavens! What was the lady speaking of? "The anticipation of this morning's event?" "Weakened nerves?" "Comfortably off?" What does it mean? Had I really been executed in the prison-yard, and was I in some place of purgatory waiting to go through the agony under different surroundings? Was this the beginning of a sinner's eternity? Were these people fiends in the guise of angels? Was I to go on for ever being executed in different shapes?

"Come, dear," continued the lady; "Walter will help you with your clothes, and after a good cup of coffee you'll be yourself again."

"And," chimed in the pretty little maiden, "we won't tell Julie what a devoted husband she is to have. A man—oh Jacko, for shame!—who becomes ill on his wedding-day merely at the thought of being married!"

During all this time my lips had refused to utter a sound, and I could now only exclaim, "Heaven have mercy on me!" a remark which caused Walter and his mother to hold a hurried conversation at the back of the sofa, and then to leave the room, saying cheerfully that they would not be gone a moment.

Left alone with me, the young girl clasped her hands over my knees, and looking into my face, said:

"Now, Jacko, my darling, tell me what is the matter? You won't keep anything from your own Nell? I admire Julie and I respect her, but if this marriage is going to make you unhappy, I'll break it off if I have to go to the girl myself and tell her that you do not love her. Oh, Jacko! my best, my dearest brother, tell me what is the matter?"

"Please leave me," was all that I could articulate.

"Dear Jacko," cried the affectionate girl, "I cannot leave you. You never spoke to me so before. My brother, my dear, dear brother!"

"Where is your brother?" I cried.

There was probably a look in my eyes that terrified the girl, for she rose to her feet and, with tears streaming from her eyes, left the room.

I was alone, and again approached the glass. The brown-bearded man looked haggard and unnatural. "For the love of Him who made us," I cried, speaking to the stranger in the mirror, "tell me who you are, and who I am?"

"Why, Jack, my boy, what is the matter?"

I felt a strong hand upon my shoulder, and, turning, confronted a pleasant-mannered, middle-aged gentleman whom I rightly inferred to be a physician. Just behind stood Walter and his mother. I do not know whether it was the strong individuality of the doctor that impressed me with a sense of the reality of my surroundings, which up to this moment had

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seemed illusory and vague, but I suddenly felt a warmth of blood returning to my limbs, and a sense of rest and security in my condition; a determination to drift willingly whithersoever fate might lead me. A smile must have shown itself in my face, for the doctor turned to the anxious lady, and said: "It is nothing, my dear madam; mere nervous excitement, which will soon pass away."

He then prepared a potion, which I cheerfully swallowed. Walter inquired whether he should not assist me to dress, and I assented. The drollery of my existence now began to take precedence of all other emotions. The brown-bearded man in the glass was no longer an object of terror in my eyes; he became amusing.

I saw, I could not fail to see, that his motions and actions were entirely in my control. Little by little, I came to a grateful acceptance of my new identity. A man who has been hanged, said I to myself, cannot be chooser in any subsequent allotment of events.

This mild acceptance of my extraordinary fate, at that time, was probably due in a large measure to the drug which the doctor had administered—a powerful narcotic no doubt—that quieted my nerves and caused my troubled brain to become languid.

Piloted by Walter, who happily insisted upon keeping hold of my arm, I passed through a spacious and handsome hall, and down a broad pair of stairs to a very luxurious breakfast-room, where, for the first time, I met the head of the family, a mild-eyed man, past middle-age, who during the strange scenes of the morning had been absent from the house, and who now greeted me very tenderly.

Throughout the breakfast which followed I remained completely silent. There was a pier-glass opposite me in which, with quiet amusement, I beheld the brown-bearded man put morsels of food into his rather handsome mouth, I myself enjoying the sensation of swallowing the same. I did not fail to notice that my silence and evident pre-occupation was a source of keen distress to the others at the table, but I was powerless to improve matters.

As the soothing effects of the doctor's potion wore away, my thoughts became more troublesome and bewildering, until finally, unable to remain any longer quiet, I rose from the table, and fled to an adjoining room.

There seemed to have been an intention on the part of some member of the family to follow me; but the head of the house exclaimed, "No, let Jack alone; he'll come out all right presently."

Upon a table in the room in which I had taken refuge lay a newspaper. I picked it up. The date—that dreadful date to which for weeks I had looked forward with sickening consternation—showed me that it was the latest issue.

The paper was called the *Denver Tribune* and was printed in Denver, Colorado. As I scanned the sheet, a faint recollection as of something heard in childhood came upon me. I recalled a conversation caught in a fragmentary way years before, while talking of this "Denver, Colorado."

What were they saying? Oh, they were speaking of Denver as the chief city of a cattle-raising province in the United States.

I was, then, still in the United States! In Denver! But how in Denver? How anywhere except in a murderer's cell in the Tombs prison, New York?

A clock on the mantelpiec struck nine.

While pondering with aching head upon these questions, my eyes encountered the following paragraph:

Harry Jessup, the brutal murderer of Eduardo Italiani, is to be hanged in the Tombs prison, New York City, at seven o'clock this morning.

Again and again I read this paragraph. My eyes devoured the three brief lines of print, till every word and letter seemed eating its way into my soul. "Harry Jessup, the brutal murderer of Eduardo Italiani, is to be hanged!" Is to be hanged? A clock on the mantelpiece struck nine. "Is to be hanged at the Tombs prison, New York City, at seven o'clock this morning." Is to be hanged? I, Harry Jessup, am to be—Oh, Heavens! what does it mean? This is the day, this is the morning, and the sun, which rose at five o'clock, is four hours old! My eyes dropped again upon the paper, which had fallen in my lap, and I read the following notice:

The marriage of Mr. John Sutherland (better known to his countless friends in Denver as "Jack" Sutherland) to Miss Julie Chamberlain will take place at the residence of the bride this morning. It is to be a very quiet affair, only the immediate friends of the two families having received cards.

For a moment my brain seemed to be bursting. The sickening nausea which I felt in the prison returned, and then, quietly, like a great wakening of some hitherto dormant intellectual faculties, there stole into my soul the consciousness of a miracle performed. I had not suffered at the hangman's hands. I lived. I had never ceased to live. Every action of my life was accessible to memory. I was still Harry Jessup. Were I dead, had I passed into another world, my store of knowledge would of necessity be increased or diminished but it remained the same.

I mentally ran over my past life, and at every station found proof of a personal and intimate knowledge of but one man, and that man was Harry Jessup. I rose and approached the glass. There stood the brown-bearded stranger.

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I looked in the face, and *knew that he had stolen my soul.* The mirror showed me the body of John Sutherland, with the soul of Harry Jessup. But the soul of the man whose body I wore, what of it?

The sound of voices, subdued but earnest, come to my ears from the adjoining room. The name of "Jack," "dear Jack," was constantly upon the lips of the distressed parents of the loving brother and sister.

It needed no marvellous perspicacity for me, stranger as I was to them all, to discover that this "brother Jack," into whose suit of flesh I had unwittingly stepped, was a very dearly beloved member of the household. I learnt from such fragments of their talk as reached my ears that the loved ones were sorely troubled at my (at John Sutherland's) behaviour, and were at a loss what to do.

The newspaper paragraph, taken in connection with the young lady's remark in my chamber, made it obvious to me that this was to have been the wedding-day of the brown-bearded man, and I readily understood the dilemma into which his (or rather my) unaccountable conduct had thrown the entire family.

Remember, I am now writing of events a year old, and, if I seem singularly composed, it is only because time has graciously permitted me to grow accustomed to the contemplation of these wonders.

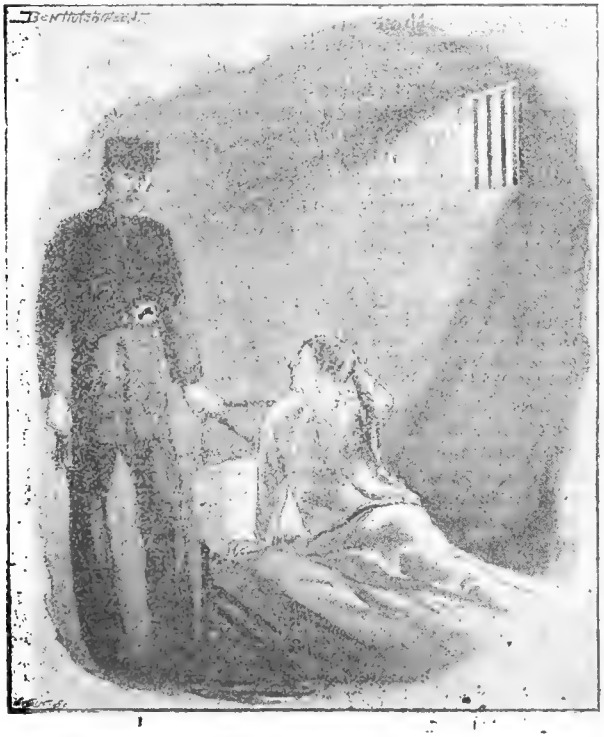
As I listened to the tender whisperings of mother and sister, so full of solicitude and anxiety, an overwhelming sense of my own enforced duplicity took possession of me. Who and what was I that I should have entered ghost-like into this happy family circle, bringing sorrow and suffering to all its members, and unwarrantably usurping the place of the eldest son; turning him from his bride, driving him——the thought flashes like fire upon my brain: Where is John Sutherland? This is his small, fat, white hand I hold before me. This is his heart which I feel beating; but his soul—himself—the man—the being who called himself Sutherland? Where is he? Was it an exchange of bodies? Between the hours of twelve last night and seven this morning I threw off the flesh and form which was my own, and assumed another mortal dwelling-place. The occupant of this body—the body which I see staring at me from yonder mirror—abandoned it for mine. It must have been so.

And my body—the external man Jessup—the corporeal shelter which this fond son and loving brother had been forced to enter; what of its fate? Dragged into a prison court-yard, and stretched by the neck at the end of a rope, two hours ago?

I do not remember all that occurred in the fever and subsequent delirium which fell upon me. I am told that I lingered between life and death for several months, tenderly watched by the parents and the sister of the unhappy man who died in my place.

When I was able to move about, my ignorance of all surroundings, which, as may be imagined, was complete, was attributed by the family physician to a shock of the brain centre, which, he explained, had destroyed my memory. I must, he said to Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland, be treated as a child, and retaught all that I had ever learned.

He suggested a trip to England, and we are now, after many months, about to leave America. My failure to recognise the affianced bride of John Sutherland has, I am told, thrown that young lady into a decline. No member of the Sutherland family has ever crossed the Atlantic, and my intimate knowledge of London will, if I ever reach London, be a new source of wonder to my companions.



"Who are you?"

We arrived in New York yesterday from Denver, and as soon as I could decently excuse myself from my "relatives," I went straightway to the Tombs prison, in Center Street. Having obtained a card of admission, I entered the inner prison, and made my way to the corridor known as "Murderers' Row." Cell No. 5, my cell, was empty. The gaoler, at sight of whom I came near to faint, informed me that Cell No. 5 had not been occupied since one Jessup, the murderer of an Italian, left it for the gallows a year ago.

"And tell me," I inquired, with a calmness which amazed me, "how this—this Jessup met his fate?"

"Terrible, sir, terrible!" replied the gaoler, evidently having, as he spoke, a vivid picture of the scene in his mind. "I never want to see the like of it again. You see, sir, he was a very nervous customer—most extraordinary so—and I expected we'd have trouble with him. But not long before midnight he fell into a sleep, just like the sleep of a child, and at half-past six he was slumbering as pretty as anything you ever saw. We hated to wake the poor fellow, but it had to be done, so I steps inside the grating and takes hold of his arm. He was awake and bright in a minute. 'All right, Walter,' he says, cheery like: 'I'm with you.' Then he looks round in a dazed sort of way, and says he: 'Why, hello! What the devil's all this?' and looking at me, he says: 'Who are you?' I told him, as kind as I could, that it was time to be going. He was on his feet then and staring round. 'Well,' says he, 'this may be a very pretty joke the boys have played on me, old man, but I don't like it. I suppose this is the County Gaol, and I'm in West Denver, hey? The boys must have got me pretty full at Charpiot's, and yet I could almost swear that I went home straight.'

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"I saw at once that he was crazy, and I thought it would be a mercy to get through the business as soon as possible: so I called in the deputies and we read him

the death-warrant. It's been a puzzle to me ever since, to know what that young chap was thinking about while we were reading the warrant. At times he'd laugh, and then he'd look sort of dazed and wild like.

"After the reading I told him we'd have to be moving and that I should be obliged to pinion his arms. 'All right, old man,' he said; 'everything goes, but I'll get even with those fellows when their time comes, you mark my words. I suppose now,' said he, with a laugh, 'you're going to haul me up?'

"I tell you, sir," continued the gaoler, "it made the cold shivers run down my back to hear him so joking like, just as if it was all a bit of fun. When we had his arms tied we started for the yard. There was a priest with him, at whom he laughed, saying: 'Well, the boys seem to want to make it as real as possible.'

"After we got into the court behind the prison where the gallows stood, and he saw the squad of police and the reporters and deputy sheriffs, he began to tremble, and then suddenly, in a voice that I can hear to this day, he screamed: 'What does it mean? Help! Murder!' As quick as possible we got him under the drop and pulled the black cap over his face, and then I think he fainted, for he cried: 'Julie! Father!' and fell down in a heap. The work was well done, and he didn't suffer much; but I can tell you, sir, I don't want to have to hang any more crazy men."

Well, as I said before, we are off for England in the morning, but I do not think I shall reach the other side. I have an idea that somewhere about half-way across the Atlantic I shall drown this brown-bearded man whom everybody calls "John Sutherland." N. P. B.

You Cannot Get Number II of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE Before Saturday, October 31st,

But on that day you will have an opportunity of getting in exchange for sixpence the following budget of literature and art:

Gates and Pillars of the Empire. *Robert Machray.*
No. 6.—Calcutta and Bombay Illustrated.
The 'Eathen. *Rudyard Kipling.*
Illustrated by Georges Montbard.
How Nelson Lost His Arm. *Randolph Murray.*
Illustrated by F. T. Jane, and from photographs.
Vengeance is Mine. (Complete Story.) *William Beatty.*
Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood.
The Poor Man's Club.
Written and Illustrated by *Harry Furniss.*
The White Slaves of England. *R. H. Sherard.*
No. 5.—The White-Lead Workers of Newcastle.
Illustrated by H. Piffard.
Perchance to Dream. *Rudolph de Cordova.*
(Complete Story.)
Illustrated by E. F. Skinner.
The Most Popular of Presidents. *Marie A. Belloc.*
Illustrated with photographs.
Music as a Medicine. *W. Paill.*
Wisdom Let Loose. *W. L. Alden.*
Illustrated by Charles May.
A Sea Change. (Complete Story.) *Morgan Robertson.*
Illustrated by S. Nation and G. W. Peters.
Ancient Military Types.
Illustrated by Crow.
A Dog-Fancying Duchess. *Robert Machray.*
Illustrated with photographs.
Secrets of the Courts of Europe. *Allen Upward.*
Second Series. No. 5.—"The Perfidy of Monsieur Disraeli."
Illustrated by Hal Hurst, R.B.A.
Harnessing the Stars. *Alfred T. Story.*
Illustrated with photographs.
The Last Extreme. (Complete Story.) *J. S. Fletcher.*
Illustrated by Sydney Cowell.

Jumbled Story Competition.—18.

On pages 572 appears a story, each line of which is numbered. The lines are all in their wrong position, and the prizes mentioned below are offered to those who write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order most nearly correct. The title is jumbled up, and should be correctly given *and pasted on the paper containing the effort.*

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

1 SHORT STORIES on or before *Monday,*
2 awarded to the readers whose solutions first
3 *JUMBLED STORY.*
4 Four Prizes—one of £5 and three of £1 each—are
5 *November 2nd,* and envelopes must be marked
6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
7 reach this office.
8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
9 offered to the readers whose keys are most nearly
10 4—9—6—2—7—8—1—5—3—12—11—13—10.
11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
13 believe to be correct, thus:

£2 is offered to the first of the readers living in Ireland who succeeds in forwarding the correct, or most nearly correct, solution.

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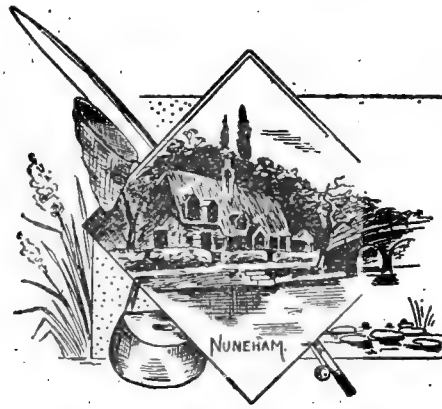

Glanders, of Squatters' Gulch.

THE stranger was intoxicated. There was no mistaking it. He was also ugly. There was no room for a doubt of that, either. The hilarious patrons of the Tarantula Saloon had for some hours been watching his increasing opulence of alcoholism and combativeness, with that interest which always marked them when prospects of a fight became prominent.

It may be supposed, therefore, that the movements of the stranger, upon the night of which I write, were viewed with something more than common interest. One by one the leading citizens had dropped into the Tarantula Saloon during the evening, until the tables were all well surrounded, and the bar was lined with watchful observers.

"Who's the stranger?" inquired Tom Cathcart carelessly, as he dealt three cards to Jack Gashwilder.

"Dunno," briefly responded that authority, throwing his hand down in a disgusted way. "He's on'y just arriv', and it's my opinion as how, if he keeps on, he'll reach the end of his lariat extremely quick."

"I've half a mind," mused Mr. Cathcart pleasantly, "to rise up and give him a benefit myself. I don't like no Missouri mud-eater to stand the boys up like he's doing."

"Never mind," affably rejoined Gashwilder, with that air of authority which gave his opinions such great weight, "hold on a bit. Fur-lined George will be along soon, and the stranger will have to take water then. Let him go on. Gimme two cards."

"Hello!" ejaculated Mr. Cathcart, a moment later; "the ball has begun."

Every man in the room had risen to his feet. The tall Missourian, a man of angular frame and sinister visage, had at last succeeded in drawing somebody into a controversy. The citizens of Squatters' Gulch were about to be entertained.

"Humph!" muttered Mr. Cathcart, "it's a shame for him to pick a row with Glanders. The poor chap can hardly hold his own head up, let alone fighting. I've a mighty good notion to sail in myself."

"Hold on!" cautioned Jack Gashwilder, with his index finger laid knowingly along his nose. "Thomas Glanders is all right; he is slow, but sure. Look there!"

The quarrel at the bar had been growing louder. The stranger, inflamed with the fiery liquor he had been drinking, had selected one of the least offensive men in the settlement as the special object of his displeasure. This person, a Mr. Thomas Glanders, was a quiet, respectably-dressed man, with a stolid face and a dejected manner, who was looked upon in a friendly, often a pitying, light by his companions. There had been something sad in his life—that was known to the entire population of the Gulch. What it was no one precisely knew, and no one cared. But nearly everybody took an interest in him, and not a soul lived in the town who would not have fought for his sake at any time.

The stranger was heaping abuse on Glanders' head—abuse which he could not comprehend, and which seemed to half bewilder him. But the offensive Missourian went on, goaded to increased fury by his own words. Still Glanders stood helplessly gazing about him, making no reply, but occasionally passing the back of his rough brown hand across his forehead. Finally, in a transport of rage, the stranger drew a revolver. Then Glanders seemed to awaken. He spoke for the first time.

"Put it up," he said quietly, "or I will kill you."

The stranger laughed, and the crowd, angry and menacing, began to close in upon him. Glanders motioned them back.

"Put it up," he repeated, "or I will shoot you in your tracks."

The stranger fired, and Glanders' hat fell to the floor.

Few of the citizens of the Gulch had known or would have believed he could act with such decision. He had hitherto been thought by them to be a slow and easy-going person, too inoffensive to be trodden upon, and too gentle to respond with violence. But upon this occasion he belied his reputation. Quick as lightning—so quickly that only one or two in the room saw the movement—a derringer sprang from his pocket, a deep report sounded through the room, and the stranger fell to the floor.

There was silence for a moment. Then the wounded Missourian, after writhing a moment where he lay, beckoned Glanders towards him. He was no longer violent. The fumes of the drink had quite evaporated from his brain, and he realised what had happened. Glanders, whose anger had disappeared as quickly as it came, when he saw he was the victor and his life was no longer threatened, stepped forward and raised the stranger's head to his knee.

"Whisky," he said shortly, to the bar-keeper.

The liquor was brought, and he poured it between the stranger's lips. It was a dramatic scene. So deep, so solemn was the colouring of the picture, that not a man in the crowd—usually a turbulent one—had as yet uttered a word.

The wounded man, somewhat revived by the stimulant, motioned Glanders to lean closer, and he obeyed. There

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was nothing but pain in his red face now, and great beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead. The stranger whispered a few words brokenly, and then suddenly fell back, dead. Glanders lowered the man's head to the floor, and then slowly rose to his feet. The hush which had some time ago fallen upon the crowd was not yet disturbed.

"Boys," said Glanders, in a voice which trembled slightly, "I hated to do it, but it couldn't be helped. I'm sorry it was so, and I'm willin' to abide by what you say. If it was murder, string me up, and be quick about it."

A murmur that rose almost to a shout ran through the room. Every man there endorsed his cause. Glanders began to move slowly towards the door. He paused once, drew his hat down over his eyes, buttoned his coat tightly about his throat, and thrust his hands into his pockets with an air that indicated a purpose.

"Poor things!" he muttered, as he strode into the night. "They're orphans now, and I made 'em so!"

* * * * *

Drawn back some paces from the roadway, close to the trunk of a tall pine tree, some distance from the sturdy settlement of Squatters' Gulch, was one of those huge, ungainly vehicles which, in the early days of pioneering, were known as prairie schooners. Near by, dimly seen through the darkness, were two lean, unhappy-looking horses, browsing in a helpless way upon the scant herbage which the place afforded. At the foot of the tree a heap of smouldering embers showed that there had been a small fire earlier in the night.

This was the scene into which Glanders peered half-an-hour after the tragic occurrence I have just described. For a long time he sat, thoughtfully and silently, upon the pole of the waggon. So far as any sign of his was concerned he might have been asleep. Possibly he was going over the events of the evening. Perhaps he was framing a scheme for the future.

When more than an hour had thus slipped by, he came out of his reverie, and rose to his feet. Thomas Glanders was a methodical man. For years he had plodded along in a quiet, careworn manner, accomplishing nothing that any of his companions could discover, but never complaining of ill-fortune or pain. Men supposed he must have money.

He lived well, but unobstrusively, and he never had difficulty in meeting his obligations. To the suffering he was always kind. Indeed, the local clergyman, who found few but sour grapes in this vineyard, was wont to say that Thomas Glanders could be relied upon, when charity was needed, to give as liberally as a gambler.

But there was no ostentation about him. He lived by method. He rose and went to bed at certain hours, he ate at prescribed times, and he drank his four glasses of whisky every day as regularly as he breathed. His was a purely matter-of-fact life. Whatever bad luck came to him—and it was altogether out of proportion to his good fortune—he accepted it without a word of complaint.

If, as was rarely the case, he had a touch of more than ordinarily pleasant luck, there was never a sign of jubilation in his conduct. He rarely talked, saving when words were absolutely necessary. What he had to do he did, and he made very little fuss about it.

When Glanders rose from his position upon the pole of the waggon, his first operation was to pile a few sticks of wood upon the coals. In a little while there was a blaze, which, after spluttering a moment, gave out considerable light. This illumination, or the sound of Glanders' footstep about the place, apparently aroused some degree of life inside the waggon, for there was a slight movement, and then a childish voice, rather petulant in its tone, said:

"The old man, I s'pose."

"Shet up!" responded another voice, obviously that of a lad, "or you'll get another larrupin'. Ef he's full, he's sassy."

Glanders leaned against the tree, and all became quiet again. For the second time since he had arrived upon this scene he fell to thinking, and, as before, his reflections were so absorbing, that he lost all conciousness of what was passing around him. He did not even notice that the canvas flap of the waggon was raised, and that two very big, blue eyes were peering cautiously through the aperture thus formed. It was also without his knowledge that the owner of those curious eyes stole out of the waggon and crept slyly towards him. Not until she spoke was he aware of her presence.

"Where's the old man?" were the first words Glanders heard.

They startled him slightly, and he looked earnestly into the young face that was upturned to his. Perhaps it was the flickering of the firelight that caused the quick shade that fell across his face. But it looked like an expression of pain. The girl, annoyed at his silence, went on impetuously:

"Don't you hear? What's the matter with you? Where's the old man?"

"Down the gulch," replied Glanders slowly, and with some difficulty.

"Oh," said the girl, with an odd mixture of sarcasm and curiosity. "He sent you up to say he was drunk, I s'pose? Said he wouldn't be home till he got good and ready—didn't he? Told you to tell us to look sharp, or he'd lick both of us when he got home, I reckon—hey?"

"Does he beat you then?" asked Glanders, with a weak attempt at evasion.

"Does he? Now you just bet he does. And I've got my opinion of a big loafer, that licks a little gal like me, what can't help herself. Some day he'll wake up the wrong outfit, and then he'll get put under the daisies with his boots on—you hear me?"

Glanders did hear her, and he shuddered. But he was strangely attracted by the big-eyed, rough-spoken little girl, who stood there looking him in the face and ejecting her words with an energy that would have been ludicrous under other circumstances. She was a slender child, perhaps twelve years old. Her hair was curly and light, and it fell in a tangled mass over her forehead and neck. She was poorly clad, and her brown feet had long been strangers to the cramping influence of shoes. There was a touch of great pity in Glanders eyes as he looked at this child standing there in the firelight and regarding him fixedly.

"Come here," he said, after awhile; "come here and talk with me. I want to ask you some questions."

He went over and sat down again upon the pole of the waggon. The girl looked at him for a moment without moving. Clearly her first impulse was to resent his suggestion. But that design lived only for a moment, and she approached him without shyness.

"I'll do it," she declared, in a voice from which the sharpness had all gone. "I don't know who you are, but I like you, though I can't tell why. It ain't 'cause you're handsome—that's dead sure."

Glanders paid no attention to this uncomplimentary

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allusion to his personal appearance. With him it was no time for idle words or thoughts.

"Tell me," he said, when the girl had settled herself on the ground in front of him; "do you like the old man?—are you fond of him?"

"Well," responded the girl, after a pause, "I can't say as I'd like to eat him. He's too handy with the back of his fist to make me so awful much in love with him."

Glanders sighed, as though he felt relieved from some anxiety.

"But, then," the girl went on, with childlike frankness, "you can't quite hate a man when he's the only purtector you've got. 'Though he was ugly he put all the bread into my mouth as ever went there, and I've got to remember that. Sometimes there wasn't much of it, and sometimes it was mighty queer bread. But as a gen'ral thing he did the best he knowed how, and —say, what are you thinking about so hard?"

Glanders was just at that moment thinking he was about the darkest criminal in the world. To save himself from possible destruction he had killed a fellow-being—an act, I regret to say, which was not sufficiently infrequent in those days, and in that section, to call for any special regrets upon its own account. But Glanders reflected that in depriving the Missouri bully of his life, he had also taken away the only prop upon which this helpless child leaned for support. It was a reflection which filled him at first with dismay and self-reproach, and then with a certain definiteness of purpose.

"Sis," said he, after a moment, passing his hand over her straying curls with a kind of rough tenderness that was not without its element of magnetism: "Sis, ef thar was a man—mind ye, I don't say thar is a man—but ef thar was one as come to you and says, says this man: 'Ef so be as you two children wants a home, bein' without one, ye can come and live along of me, and though it ain't a refined and ellygant abode'—ef any man was to say this to ye, and yer dad didn't particularly mind, what would you answer?"

The girl looked full in his face.

"Answer? Why, I'd collar the offer like chain-lightning—only"—she hesitated an instant—"only the old man never'd stand by and let me have such a good thing as that—never."

"He'll never bother you any more, my child," said Glanders. "Do ye feel very bad about it?"

"Bad?" she echoed.

"Yes. The old man has been took, as it were. He was killed, my child, and the man what offers to take ye into his home is the one as did it."

The young girl started back, and regarded Glanders with a strange expression. It was not a look of repulsion, or anger, or fright, but rather a look of astonishment. Presently, after peering into his eyes for some little time, she said:

"Then I don't believe it was your fault. You ain't the kind of man to do that sort of thing 'thout a cause. And as for me, it's astonishin' he hain't ketched it afore."

Glanders took a deep breath, which sounded like a sigh of relief.

"Then," said he, "we must be movin'."

In the morning the camp of Squatters' Gulch was surprised to see a huge emigrant waggon drawn up to the door of Glanders' cabin; and, later in the day, it was still further astonished to observe two children, a boy and a girl, playing about the place. Who they were, and where they came from, was a deep and absorbing mystery. That their advent was connected with the death of the stranger was not a theory which occurred to many of the citizens. One of the leading explanations put forward by those who conversed upon the subject was the proposition that Glanders' suppositious wife in the States—an appendage which was attached in a greater or less degree to the main bulk of the population of that salubrious locality—had forwarded her children to be cared for by their legitimate protector. But whatever Squatters' Gulch may have thought or expressed upon the subject, Squatters' Gulch did not carry its curiosity offensively near to Glanders, or his cabin on the hill.

Meanwhile, in the cabin itself there were some odd developments. The new residents had quietly domesticated themselves with that affluent confidence which is the distinguishing trait of that migratory childhood of the West, which, being cast this way and that by the changes which constantly occur in new countries, readily accustoms itself to fresh surroundings. One night, sitting before the fire, with his short clay pipe in his mouth and the children on the floor at his feet, dreamily regarding the coals, Glanders broke the silence.

"Sis," said he, "I don't want to pry into no family secrets of yourn, 'cos it ain't none of my business perticklery, but, at the same time, it ain't reasonable for me to go on always a-callin' of ye 'Sis,' and the young chap 'Bub.'"

"That's so, I reckon," promptly replied the young girl. "My name's Lucy Bryton. And his'n," pointing to the boy, "his'n is Robert. His t'other name ain't like mine, though, 'cause he's only a 'dopted brother. His name is Rathbun—Robert Rathbun. Hello! What's up, Mr. Tom?"

"Nothing?" replied Glanders, whose face had become rigid. "On'y I dropped my pipe, that's all. Go to bed, youngsters. I want to think. Hold up a bit. What became of yer mother, Bub?"

"Dead. Drowned in the Missouri overflow. I haven't seen her since I was a baby."

When they were gone, and for hours afterwards Glanders sat looking gloomily into the fire.

"Pore gal!" he muttered, after a long time. "Ef matters had come out a leetle different, that would hev bin my boy. Mine. Well, what's to hinder now?"

Having by some acute mental process convinced himself that nothing was to hinder, Glanders went thoughtfully to bed.

* * * * *

The soft autumn days, gilded by the clear and genial Colorado sun, melted slowly away into the crisp and vestal winter. Then came the budding spring, the lazy summer, and the blushing autumn again. So the weeks glided into months, and the months closed into years, until Squatters' Gulch, ashamed of its rough and uncouth name of other days, adopted the more exalted title of Clarion City.

There were other changes, too, in the general atmosphere surrounding the place. The rough and somewhat uncouth dwellings which formerly covered the steep sides of the ravine had almost entirely disappeared, and their places were filled with more sightly cottages. The business part of the town had grown commensurately with the other portions of Clarion City, and the place presented an altogether sightly appearance, cosily tucked away among the pine-clad foothills.

In a tasteful cottage, far towards the outer edge of settlement, lived Mr. Thomas Glanders and the

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members of his family, who have heretofore been described in this veracious narrative. It was a pretty place, and it was marked here and there by the unmistakable traces of a woman's presence. Neat white curtains hung in the windows, a hammock swung on the verandah, and a trailing vine grew up over the posts by the door.

One night, as the sun was climbing down across the western sky, the verandah was occupied by two young people. A strong, hearty young man was swinging in the hammock, while sitting beside him, idly moving the network backwards and forwards, was a lithe and graceful girl. She was blushing deeply, but not hanging her head. There was, indeed, in her large, blue eyes, a look of open frankness, which I do not think is often found about the faces of young women when they are discussing the subject which was at that moment occupying her attention.

"There is something which seems almost like sacrilege about it, Robert," she said with a touch of remonstrance in her voice. "I have grown to think you my brother in reality."

"But you love me, Lucy! You have told me so."

His voice was deep, and not unmusical to the ear. And it had about it, in the time of pleading, a persuasive tenderness which, I fear, more than one of the fluttering damsels of the Gulch had found it difficult to resist. But Miss Lucy was not of the common sort, and she did not heedlessly assent to the proposition advanced.

"What," she asked presently, "would he think?"

It was apparent that the young man did not require a more definite descriptive term to understand who was referred to.

"He would scarcely object, Lucy. You know he loves both of us very dearly, and his greatest happiness would be in making us happy."

"True," replied Miss Lucy thoughtfully. "But if—if he should rather we did not seek this kind of happiness. Robert—you know we owe him a very great deal! Our home, our rescue from an existence that would have left us both more to be pitied than if we were dead; our education—all were given us by him. We can scarcely do anything that may bring him pain, Robert."

The young man in the hammock was silent for a moment.

"Tell me," he said, in a little while, "why you suppose there is any reason that he would object."

Miss Lucy's face assumed a deeper scarlet.

"I—I—well, nothing. It is probably my imagination."

"Will you ask him?"

Another pause. Then, in a low voice:

"Yes, I will ask him to-night. If he consents, Robert, I will do all that you have asked."

"That's a dear, sweet Lucy!" exclaimed Robert, springing to his feet and kissing her lips. "We shall be very happy."

As he strolled down the hill, Lucy's eyes followed his retreating figure sadly. When he was gone, she drew a long and slightly tremulous breath, and laid her head against the post. She still sat thus with her eyes bent upon the ground, when a heavy footfall aroused her attention.

Mr. Thomas Glanders, returning from his office at the mouth of the Giant Mine. Not quite the Thomas Glanders we have known heretofore. His eyes were serener now than they were of old, and his tread had not that element of hesitation which formerly marked it. Thomas Glanders, mine-owner and operator, with a pretty home, and the benefits of solicitous female society, was rather inclined to be an ornament to his sex.

"Good evenin', Lucy," he said kindly, as he drew a chair up to her side, and seated himself so that the folds of her dress brushed against his knees. "I met Robert as I came up the hill. A fine boy that, Lucy. I'm as proud of him as if I had been his father."

A moment of silence, during which Miss Lucy breathed a trifle quickly. One hand lay unemployed in her lap. Glanders picked it up, and held it in his own. It looked so small, so white, so lovely, in his great palm, that he speedily covered it up by drawing his brown fingers about it.

"It's a whiter hand," he began, slowly and reflectingly, "though it ain't much bigger than it was when I first took it into mine, that night under the big tree. Ah, my girl, I didn't see then; and I didn't get to imagine that you would be so dear to me some day. I didn't know that in the course of time you would get to be—what you are to me. If I had——"

Another pause. This time Lucy was slightly trembling.

"If I had," he continued, "I should almost have been afraid to see you."

"Afraid!" The words came reluctantly and almost in a whisper.

"Afraid I might some time lose you—afraid that some other love but the regard you had for clumsy, poor-spoken old Tom Glanders might some day be stole away by a deeper, a greater regard for another man."

Mr. Glanders rose and walked to the other end of the verandah. Then he came slowly back, and placed his heavy hand, light enough now, upon the sunny head.

"Lucy," he began—"child, you are more to me than I can tell you—more than I know. There is but one happiness for me—but one rest after my day's struggle. And it has been a struggle, Lucy, that ain't always been easy for to get the best of. But, Lucy, I don't want to find fault, nor to complain, if it has brought me you. Eh? Why, child, you are cryin'! Dearie, if I've said anything that's grieved ye, don't mind me. Lucy, I'll never speak of it again, as long as I live. I take it all back, Lucy. I do!"

Mr. Glanders was down by her side, holding her hands and trying to soothe her. In a moment she became quite calm.

"You have been kind to me," she said, after a little while. "I was only a stranger's child—a stranger who would have taken your life. You took me in, and cared for me, and worked and toiled for me, so that I might have comforts and be happy. You took me, a ragged, rough, ill-bred child, and you gave me the chance to become a lady. You have earned my—my love, and——"

"Don't speak that way, Lucy. I didn't calculate to buy your heart. I didn't, Lucy, and I wouldn't take it like that."

"You didn't buy it, you—you won it. Tom, I love you very, very dearly. It may not be the kind of love you expect, just yet; but, by-and-bye, when we have grown used to each other, when we have forgotten that we were——"

"Father and daughter, almost," he broke in. "Are you sure, Lucy? Will you never regret this?"

"Never!" she cried impulsively. "But let it be quick. Do not wait a day, but have it done at once! It—it must be without delay, or—or——"

She did not finish the sentence, but with a sharp, convulsive kiss upon his brown cheek—a kiss which sounded like a gasp—she was gone.

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In the gloaming of his porch that night sat Mr. Thomas Glanders, a very happy man. Behind him lay all the gloom, and sorrow, and pain, that could never come to him now. In the future—what? He could not answer, though it seemed very bright.

* * * * *

It was quickly and quietly accomplished. Almost before the staid citizens of Clarion City were out in the streets, Mr. Glanders and his bride had walked to the little chapel down the ravine, and back again.

He had noticed that Lucy was very pale that morning, and that there were long, deep lines in her face. Clearly she had not slept. But Mr. Glanders attributed the fact to a weakness of the sex, and imagined that in a little time it would soon wear away. Robert did not come home during the night, having gone a twenty mile ride to visit some friends.

Mr. Glanders had wished to defer the quiet ceremony until his arrival, but Lucy had refused with a feverish haste, which her companion set down to the score of diffidence. It was some hours after the marriage, that Mr. Glanders, failing to stir up any enthusiasm in Lucy's breast regarding the various topics of conversation, kissed her tenderly, and strolled out for a walk among the trees.

"She's better alone for a time," he muttered apologetically to himself. "When I come back in half-an-hour's time she'll be as bright and cheery as ever."

For a long time after he went away, Lucy sat looking blankly at the wall. Then she rose and walked out upon the porch, and stood looking down the hill, where she had last seen Robert pass away. In a few moments she became conscious that some one was near her.

It was Robert, white as a ghost, and trembling nervously. She looked into his face, but could not speak. There was a deep, pathetic inquiry in her eyes, which spoke more plainly than words.

"Yes, I know," he said, in a strange and worried fashion. "I heard it as I came up the street. I shall not reproach you, Lucy, for, if he asked you to marry him, it was the only return you could make for all his more than fatherly kindness."

There was a footstep not far away, but it was not noted by the two young people.

"I have come, Lucy," continued Robert, in the same hurried and unnatural fashion, "to say good-bye."

"Robert!" she gasped, "do not—do not go away."

"I must," he said, in a strange tone, regaining a part of his own force as he saw a touch of weakness in the woman he loved. "There is no other course. It would break my heart to stay here and see you the wife of another. It would wear out my gratitude, my manhood. Day by day, all that is good about me would fade and fade away, until I died of shame and mental agony, or became a reproach to all the world. It must be, Lucy. We love each other too dearly to have it otherwise."

She was silent.

"Good-bye, Lucy," he said, quietly, taking her hand.

"Good-bye," she whispered, in a choking voice.

For a moment he held her hand in his. At the same instant a shadow that had been thrown by the sun across the ground almost at their feet, began slowly and stealthily to steal away.

"Try," said Robert, struggling hard to regain his composure, "try to forget me. You can only find happiness in that oblivion. Or, if you think of me sometimes, remember me only as the brother who grew up with you and loved you with—with only a—brother's love. Good-bye. God bless you, little sister!"

He turned on his heel, and took a step forward. The sharp report of a pistol from the rear of the house arrested his attention.

"What was that?" asked Lucy, turning a shade whiter.

In a moment they were both under the great pine tree which stood a few paces up the side of the hill. What they saw at that moment will never be forgotten by either.

Stretched upon the soft carpet of pine needles, with a look of ineffable gentleness in his fast glazing eyes, a smile on his lips, and her portrait on his heart, lay the rigid figure of the husband of the stranger's child. L. R.

POST-CARD COMPETITION, No. 18.

A GUINEA is offered this week to the reader who first names the noun of four or more than four letters mentioned most frequently on pages 551 to 560. Another guinea is offered to readers living more than 100 miles from London under the same conditions. *Post-cards only, please.*

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION, No. 16.

THE London guinea goes this week to Miss Strickland, 11, Park Walk, Fulham Road, S.W., and the provincial guinea to Miss Emma Bates, 26, Hunter's Vale, Birmingham. The sentence was: "She caught the girl's hand, and pressed a sovereign into it."

RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION, No. 15.

SEVERAL competitors tied for the first place in this competition, and the £5 has gone to Miss Tomkis, 12, Portland Place, Leamington, whose solution was the first to hand with only three errors. As none of the Irish readers succeeded in getting within four numbers of being correct, the £2 is added to the remaining £3 and the total equally divided among the following readers: Mr. Siegfried H. Herkomer, Lululaund, Bushey, Herts; Miss Mannion, 16, St. George's Road, Ladbroke Grove, W.; Mr. Alan S. Holland, Llangathan, Oxford; Mr. G. V. Padmore, 2, Bedford Villas, Gerard Road, Weston-super-Mare; and Mrs. M. E. Wynne, 56, Algeron Road, Lewisham, S.E.

KEY.

51	30	252	2	141	21	154	88	106
145	143	191	76	133	198	268	8	7
258	4	155	69	124	108	236	111	211
86	122	255	251	55	92	224	33	95
130	181	186	247	96	15	188	66	125
56	153	39	221	97	132	217	75	235
227	31	180	136	22	213	9	245	139
223	194	265	37	168	157	152	131	114
148	10	195	205	138	87	176	123	150
140	253	94	44	165	189	109	82	210
248	112	34	57	65	242	246	115	54
98	6	45	90	201	156	182	52	89
64	266	144	261	40	80	216	93	204
117	59	202	60	244	61	228	270	91
70	254	84	81	229	256	121	185	163
220	231	3	260	239	16	11	207	32
19	203	25	196	222	240	103	104	47
41	250	79	197	206	164	24	14	101
13	226	36	199	159	257	135	49	151
23	175	263	243	238	172	116	214	127
73	53	167	27	209	126	171	48	184
78	85	38	142	190	193	77	233	110
149	50	264	267	129	46	161	12	107
118	234	230	177	74	120	183	147	29
26	235	241	137	17	99	62	35	119
219	262	128	134	249	160	71	200	218
63	215	102	58	259	100	67	212	83
269	208	18	146	178	166	68	20	237
158	187	28	43	162	169	105	179	5
42	170	1	173	72	192	174	232	113

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OR,

The Romance of a Lost Continent.

By **Geo. C. Wallis**, Author of *"The Winning of Gunhild,"* etc.

SUMMARY.

ARNON's memory of his early days begins at a time when he finds himself abandoned on the seashore, whence he discovers the cave of a band of pirates, by whom he is captured. Under the care of Didron the Chief he grows up as one of them, and on the death of the former he takes command. Viol is the daughter of Didron and marries Arnon, who, on one of his voyages, lands at Miropis and consults the Priest of the Spirit of Truth, from whom he learns that within a year and a half he will be a captive in a foreign land, and that he need not fear death until he has visited the Grotto of the Sleeper three times. On returning, he finds his ship burnt and men killed. After fighting he escapes, and meets and falls in love with Briseis, daughter of King Dulo X. of Atlantis, and to her he reveals his identity. Vichri, Briseis' cousin and lover, believes Arnon to be dead. For several months he lives at the Court; but the old roving spirit returns, and he sets out to discover the cave of treasure left by Didron and his band. On his return from an unsuccessful attempt, he finds his identity discovered by King Dulo, and is sent away as a galley slave. During his absence in a small boat up a creek on the Coast of Nubia, the ship is taken by rebels. Led by Arnon, the whole of the population, starving and fearing annihilation by the rebels, set out for another town. His followers are routed, and he is captured by Asos, an Egytian captain, by whom he is taken to Memphis. He saves from a leopard, Vesta, the daughter of a priest, and himself becomes a priest. While walking through the Temple he hears voices.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLOTTERS FOILED.

AT first no sound rewarded my anxious ears, but presently, their confidence being restored and their fears allayed, the unseen speakers breathed more freely, and began to talk among themselves.

"'Twas but a bat in the passages," said one, with a deep, gruff voice; "go on with your plan, and let us be away on our duty."

"Art hasty?" answered another in a thin, suspicious tone. "Wert ever so, Amasis? Lucky it will be for thee if it were only a bird of darkness, and not a spy of the King. But it hath gone, and now we may speak freely."

"Gone, indeed," thought I. "You do not know, my friend, that Arnon, the son of Didron, is behind this thin, deceitful wall."

"Then speak, and quickly as well as freely," said a third voice, in eager impatience, "for you know the time is short, and there is much to do."

"And thou, too, art hasty," said the gruff voice grumblingly, "and art like to spoil all if thou art not careful. Well, it is this I wish to say, *that after Menophres sleeps* you must draw your sword, calling on Osiris to witness that the King is dead, and the new king reigns. Pamonthes shall be waiting by the door of the banquet-room with a picked and well-paid band of armed men, and I shall be with him; and then it only needs that we bestir ourselves, and Pamonthes will be Pharaoh by to-morrow's sun, for the soldiers love him better than his elder brother. And then, my friends, our places in the land will be high, and thou, Amasis, shalt have the house and wealth of this fat old Mitres and his upstart, adopted son.

"Already, near the quarries of Silsilis, a secret army is drilling, and all is in readiness. See to it that you play your parts well, and victory is ours."

Well I knew now who the speaker was, and who the listener whom he called Amasis; the first a priest of the temple, who envied Mitres his place and fame, and the second a captain of the Royal Guard, a favourite of young and dissolute Pamonthes, the King's brother. The third, whom I could not make out, spoke next, answering Mexo.

"So far, good. But what is my task, and at what hour shall the blow fall?"

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"Thine it is to see that the Royal Guard, who will be making merry in another room, be well drugged in their cups, so that their Royal leader may call on them in vain when the plot is out. At midnight, when the revelry is at its height, and the sober citizens are a-bed, that is the time. Dost understand all instructions now?"

"One thing only," said Amasis, "the potent powder on which success depends——"

"Is here," replied the chief conspirator. "Take good care of it. And now to your posts; I shall not fail."

Vain boaster! little he recked of one well named the Iron-fingered!

The retreating footsteps of his two confederates echoed down the stone-flagged court, and for a time Mexo paced slowly along the narrow passage, rendering it impossible for me to leave my secret recess without his knowledge, for, through a chink in the wall, I saw that the moon was now flooding the corridor with a garish light, where before had been darkness. I waited awhile, thinking how best to frustrate this murderous plot.

A great banquet was spread in the palace, I knew, and already it wanted but two hours of midnight; the guests would be sipping the first goblets of wine wherewith to whet their pampered palates, and it was a full hour's walk from the temple. Amasis had gained a good start of me with the deadly poison that was to be slipped unnoticed into the King's cup, and doubtless some time must elapse before the vile stuff could do its work. Meanwhile, the schemers of this nefarious plan were gathering their forces together. And not only was the King in danger, but Mitres, my host, and, judging from the bitter manner Mexo had spoken of me, my own life, perhaps, depended on whether I could reach the palace before the fatal draught was drunk.

Still that suspicious villain paced before my means of egress, seeming in no way disposed to leave the spot, and presently I discovered why.

As he walked up and down, I heard him muttering to himself:

"How much longer before they come? . . . . Surely Pamonthes is not delayed. . . . . The time is passing. . . . . I made him understand the place of meeting!"

So I left him.

Now I saw that at any risk I must escape, and that quickly, so as noiselessly as possible I slid back the stone and stepped into the corridor when his back was turned towards me. But as ill luck would have it, a bat flew noisily overhead, brushing the wall with his clumsy wings, and Mexo, starting, turned and saw me. Further secrecy was useless, so I greeted him with a derisive laugh.

"Seest that walls have ears, Mexo, when treachery is planned! Pamonthes will rail well at thee, when he comes, for a careless chatterer!"

"Or at thee, for a vile spy!" cried Mexo, rushing at me with uplifted hand, in which gleamed a short dagger. Not a muscle I moved, not a step I stirred, till that flashing point hovered just before my eyes, and then, with a lightning movement, I seized in an iron grasp the hand that held it, wrenching the wrist round with such sudden force that the bone snapped, the weapon fell from the nerveless fingers, and the arm hung useless at his side, whilst a cry of pain and rage burst from his lips.

In another moment my own dagger had done its work, and I dragged the traitor's body into the full light of the moon, leaving the blade stuck upright in him.

"There, disloyal wretch!" I said, "Pamonthes will find thee waiting for him patiently."

So I left him, and set forth for the palace in breathless haste. Down the echoing halls of that mighty temple,

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through the sacred groves, beyond the outer pylons, and down the giant avenue of sphinxes, five thousand paces long, I ran with flying feet, the clatter of my teak-wood sandals jarring on the still night air. Never before had that awesome avenue, with its huge, stolid heads gazing in grim indifference upon the doings of puny man, its wide, staring roadway void of sheltering shadow, and the buildings of the great city looming up as I neared the further end, seemed so interminably long.

Some priests coming up to the temple would have stayed me to inquire the cause of such unseemly speed, but there was that in my face made them give way for me, dallying not for any answer to their questionings.

On, on, I ran, till I came to the great arch that spans the roadway at the outer end, and there met those whom of all on earth I least wished to meet just then—Pamonthes and a troop of his followers. Fortunately, none of them knew me by sight.

"Whither now, in such haste, priest of Amun?" asked the Royal rebel suspiciously, whilst his men surrounded me.

"To one who sits at the banquet table of the King to-night," I answered quickly, ready-witted for once in my life, "with a secret message from one Mexo, *whom thou knowest.*"

"And the name of him to whom you take this message?" asked he, partly satisfied.

"Amasis," I replied, without hesitation, "a captain of the guard, who stands high in favour at Court, *and hopes by to-morrow's sun to stand higher still.*"

"It is well. Go on thy way swiftly, and it may be that thou shalt find a prouder post before to-morrow's sun has set," said Pamonthes, now reassured.

"I doubt it not, Prince," I answered, "and hearken, you will find Mexo, already armed, waiting for you in the great corridor of the northern hall."

Then, chuckling in anticipation of the angered astonishment of the conspirators when they should find how they had been tricked, I passed under the arch, and away to the palace. It now wanted less than an hour to midnight, and the fate of Egypt hung upon the swiftness of my feet.

Past noble dwellings, fertile, fairy gardens, deep, pellucid pools, stone-banked irrigation streams, where pilfering fishers cast their nets surreptitiously under the shade of the persea trees, past scores of humbler houses, crowded together in unhealthy closeness, and through the terraced flower-strewn walks of the Royal abode, thick-starred in their season with sweet-smelling roses, lowly violets, gorgeous chrysanthemums, fragile anemones, fragrant lotus, acinon, bay trees in bloom, and the twining flowers of the papyrus; past all these, without a thought for their strange beauty under the pale-faced moon, I ran, till I came to the portal of the palace, then, past the soldiers of the guard, roughly brushing aside the wardens of the brazen doors, and tearing costly hangings from their hooks in my hasty passage, to the horror of the Royal servants, I rushed on till I gained the banquet-room, and burst into the presence of Pharaoh, dressed in my priestly panther skins, with the golden scarabæus of office glowing on my forehead, the long, straight-handled censer-cup, with brazen hawk perched at the end, swinging loosely from my girdle, and the dagger of Mexo in my hand!

The assembled guests dropped their glasses on the groaning table and turned towards me, as I advanced up that gilded room, with surprise, annoyance, fear, and perplexity

Bending low, I whispered in his ear.

sweeping across their countenances, according as they were in the plot or ignorant thereof.

Grim, implacable, not heeding their dismay, I strode to the seat of Pharaoh, who was even at that crucial moment lifting a coloured goblet of fine Anthylla to his lips, and before the possibly death-laden draught could reach them I had hurled it out of his hand, smashing the brittle ware into a thousand fragments on the marble floor, and scattering the costly wine upon the unstained board.

"By the stone-toothed Fish of Sebek!" cried Menophres angrily, "an thou hast not good reason for this thou shalt die the death before the sun rise. What meanest thou?"

Bending low, I whispered in his ear:

"To save thy life, if it be not too late. Hast a trusty messenger?"

"Yes, by all the gods," said Pharaoh, and then, in a louder tone, "Hither, Plexis!"

A youth all gorgeous in silk and purple trappings came forward, bowing low. To him the King, at my desire, gave order to take his signet seal to Asos, the chief captain of the guard, bidding him command his men to instantly cease feasting and hold themselves in readiness by the door of the banquet-room, and also to close the doors without till word was sent to re-open them. As the fleet-footed youth sped away on his mission, Amasis, the plotter, rose from his seat, and was about to follow him, but quick as thought the King saw it, and in a stern tone called him back.

"Be seated, Amasis. I like not my guests to leave until the feast is over. Bethink thee of that pale, rich Teniotic thou hast not yet tasted."

With an ill grace the soldier obeyed the command, gulping down a deep draught to hide his desperation and chagrin.

"And now, priest, tell us the reason of this strange interruption to our festivity," asked Menophres.

"Another word for thine ear alone," I said. "Who passed

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thee that goblet of wine I dashed so roughly from thy lips?"

"Amasis," answered the King, "but saving a draught of zythus, which my own servants brought, it was the first drink of the night."

"Then thou art safe," I replied, "and as to my story, it were better told so that the company can hear it."

By this time the attendants had cleared away the spilt Anthylla wine, and carried off the red amphora from which it had been poured. Then as briefly as I could I related what had passed between the three conspirators in the temple, and their plans for carrying out their plot, omitting only their names; and all the time I spoke Amasis watched me with eyes half-fearful, half-threatening, and hand upon his sword. When I told how I had slain Mexo, a muttered oath burst from his lips, which the King noticed but ignored.

"And the names of the three wretches?" asked Menophres.

"He whom I slew was Mexo, the priest, the third I know not, save that he is among the Royal Guard, and the second is Amasis yonder," I answered, pointing to the culprit.

"Seize and bind the traitor!" cried the King, rising and flashing with wrath, "and to-morrow he shall lie on the bed of torment!"

But even as he spoke there came the sound of the clashing of swords and the cry of conflict from without, telling that Pamonthes and his armed men were attacking the palace, and, hearing it, Amasis drew his sword, calling upon all who favoured the young Prince to quit themselves like men and hurl the old tyrant from his throne.

Scores of the guests unsheathed their blades at once, and leaping back from the table, joined him, while the others gathered round the Royal chair, prepared to defend it to the death. And I saw that the parties were evenly balanced, so that not yet was the danger past.

"Fear not, my son," said a voice in my ear, "for the gods will surely fight for us this night. Take this sword and use it well—it is one of the two I always wear at royal feasts."

I turned at the familiar tone, and saw Mitres at my side, armed with a bright, broad-bladed knife of sacrifice, and his face beaming with a quiet glee. Ay, he was as merry as a merle that night. Then there came the shock of arms, and the din of strife within deadened the sounds of battle from without. It seemed as though a million of the evil spirits of Amenti were let loose to work havoc on earth, so fearful was the uproar, so terrible the confusion that reigned in that gilded room.

The great table, loaded with its costly viands and fine old wines, was overturned in the midst of the turmoil, stools and chairs were flung about in inextricable chaos, arrows whistled down the lengthy chamber, and were transfixed in the oaken beams of the walls and roof, spears flashed over our devoted heads, swords swung in deadly strokes, and through it all rang the piercing shrieks of the women, huddled trembling in a corner furthest from the strife.

Those who fought on the King's side now gained the better of the fray, and where stern Pharaoh's sword cut its way with wrathful fury, where Mitres used his bright, broad blade with grimmest joviality, and where I wrought with quickening pulse and savage joy, the rebels gave back terror-stricken, dismayed, and would have fled, but that the door was barred. In desperate strait, like rats driven to a corner, they turned again, and fought us doggedly, falling beneath our onslaughts one by one.

Amasis still lived, and to him, through all the press of men, I forced my way, till we were face to face, for all the lust of battle that had fired my pirate days came over me that night like a surging flood, drowning every other feeling in its mad and deep intensity.

"Now, plotter," I cried exultingly, "prepare to die as Mexo died!"

His face contorted with the evil passions that worked within, he answered me with a cry of rage and then a sweeping stroke of his sword, but stepping back a pace, I parried it, dealing him in reply a home thrust that sent my blade through armour and tunic and body, pinning the wretch to the wooden beam of the doorway.

He slain, the rest lost heart, and very soon we stood alone, the victors in that blood-stained room, but a dozen men all told, each cut and hacked and pierced with many wounds, and listening with bated breath for the sounds from outside to tell us whether friends or foes had triumphed there.

At last the King bade them open the door, and in rushed Asos, followed by the remnant of the faithful guards, leading a prisoner with hands bound behind him, sullen of mien, and hatred glaring from his blood-shot eyes.

"Pamonthes," said his elder brother sternly, "thou seest how vain it is to fight against the appointed of the gods. Now what is thy pleasure?"

"To ask no favour from *thee*, tyrant," was the only answer the rebel made, and that with taunting insult in his tone.

"Away with him!" cried Menophres, angered at his stubborn hatred; "nor let me see his face again alive."

So they took him, and he passed to his doom, and though it was on my tongue to ask him: "Didst find Mexo waiting for thee?" I forebore, so miserable it is to see a man going to meet his death that way, even when he goes to meet it as did this man, scowling and defiant.

The first glimmerings of dawn were now lighting up the ghastly relics of the chamber, so the King bade the attendants clear away the corpses, and prepare for a still more sumptuous feast on the morrow, to hold revel over the defeat of the traitors, commanding Mitres and myself to be present. He then dispatched a strong force under Asos to the quarries of Silsilis, with orders to attack the rebels there gathering, and slay them to a man without mercy; and having seen the loyal regiment start on its mission, we retired to our several homes.

The city was in a ferment of excitement for some time, many thousands of the disaffected needing little urging to break into open revolt, but the news that the plot had failed and Pamonthes was executed, together with the vigorous measures taken for keeping the peace, prevented the uproar from getting beyond bounds, and by noon the tumult had subsided and all fear was at an end.

CHAPTER X.

Love and Jealousy.

Night came, and the banquet, a feast more lavishly extravagant than any at which I had yet broken bread. The table glittered from end to end with the costly vessels of gold and silver and pattern-coloured glass; great earthern dishes held groaning weights of the richest food the land contained; on a hundred dainty platters, all temptingly arranged, reposed a hundred toothsome morsels—dear-bought luxuries, spices and fruits that far-off Ind had been ransacked for, and which stood for the ransom of many humble, toiling, unknown lives, and the weight of many of the gold and silver rings which the Egyptians use for money.

Of wine there was no end; nay, it seemed as though old Sihor himself were tapped and running into the vast chamber, so plentiful in number were the pointed amphora resting in their stone rings, that the servants were emptying and carrying away, only to bring in a fresh supply in return. In the outer hall, visible from the banquet table now that the doors were flung open, sat the soldiers of the guard, feasted and honoured for their brave defence of the night before, and the bands of musicians, hired jesters and dancing girls, these latter all gaily and scantily dressed.

Pharaoh Menophres was a medium-sized man, clean-shaven as a priest, liberal handed with what he had, no

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matter from whence or how it came, and, save when angered or in a sullen humour, merry of speech and jolly of countenance. Near him, on his right, sat I, with Mitres on one side and Itaska the wife of Asos on the other, and many were the bright, bold glances that the stately matron cast upon me whilst we talked, or when our hands met in passing the dishes on the board.

She was a great favourite with Queen Hamense, I perceived, and for all my fame and royal favour, I felt ill at ease that night beneath my mask of festive talk and gay demeanour.

"Come, my valiant priest!" cried Pharaoh, holding out his glass to be refilled, "pledge me in a draught of rare Anthylla, such as thou dashed from my lips but yestereve. I'll warrant thee it is not death-laden this time, but life-giving."

"I drink to thee, O King," I said, draining the cup, thing to ask, and a vision of the sea floated before my eyes as I pondered.

"Art slow of speech all suddenly," said the Queen.

"'Tis a weighty thing to ask boons of monarchs," I answered, "and needeth a wise head to make good choice."

"Perchance 'tis a matter of the heart, my priest!" said Pharaoh, with a broad smile, "and even so, speak on."

Before I could make reply Mitres struck in, quaking with his quiet jollity, and told the whole story of my fight with the leopard, and how his daughter owed her life to me. Itaska at my side drew off a space at this, frowning darkly.

"By Isis and Osiris!" cried Menophres, hugely amazed, "since the reign of the Timeless Kings there hath been no such man in Egypt. Out with thy wish, man, that I may grant it; for as to this maid of thine, Mitres, it seemeth that thou and herself and this priest can best settle that matter. Out with thy wish, Arnon!"

At last the King bade them open the door.

'but methinks a fill of the wine of Mareotis would be better." This, I knew, was his favourite.

"Hast sound sense, as well as quick wit, swift feet and a strong arm," said Menophres, "and shalt have thy wish. Thou, Mitres, I know, favourest most the pale Teniotic wine, and the Queen here, with Itaska, swears by the juice of the Thasian grape from the Sebennytic nome; but I and thou, Arnon, will drink together the elixir of Mareotis in preference."

Thereat they brought us an amplitude of the sweet, white-coloured liquid, which, though kept for a great time, has ever a light, fragrant aroma, and does not confuse the head like other wines, and we drank deeply of it to the destruction of all our enemies and to the increasing greatness of Egypt.

"Now ask of me," said Pharaoh, "what boon thou dost most crave, and it is much that I will grant thee, but for whom I had not been here to-night."

Now I thought awhile, racking my brain for the wisest

"Above all things," I said, "I desire a swift ship, that I may sail the waters of the great sea to the north, for it has ever been my longing to ride the wind-raised waves."

"Shalt have the swiftest ship in all my fleet!" answered the King, "and another on the Sea of Shari, that is to the east, if thou likest."

"Then am I well repaid for my duty," I answered, bowing to the throne-seat.

Then a draught of Thasian wine, such as the Queen liked best, was passed round the board, and all drank freely, so that many began to nod their heads, and men wandered in their talk. The King then spoke, in a voice growing husky with the liquor, slapping his thigh when he began.

"If thou art repaid, then I will grant thee still further guerdon, so that thou mayst be under obligation to me, and for that I shall demand of thee an act in return. I will make thee, with Mitres, my private counsellor, give thee one of my palaces in which to live, and as many of the

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golden rings as thou mayst want at any time, if thou wilt but fulfil me one desire."

"And what may that be, O King?" I asked, dazzled by the greatness he put before me.

"Only that thou take in marriage the daughter of Mitres here—Vesta—whom thou rescued from the leopard," he replied.

At this Mitres brightened, and, seizing my hand, pressed it warmly; but Itaska's face grew darker than before. I hesitated a moment, but by then the Thasian wine had reached my head, it hummed within my ears, it cast a whirling maze of colour before my eyes, it drowned the memory of a fair one far away, and, thinking that I could not do better than wed the sweetest maid I had seen in Khem, who loved me unreservedly, and feeling, moreover, the greed of wealth and power roused by the King's promise, I made answer that his request was more than acceptable to me, and that I felt overpaid for my services.

And so the matter was settled, and the feast wore on till daybreak, when the grim skeleton which had stood by the wall was removed, and we dispersed to our homes to sleep off the follies of the night.

Towards noon, when I woke from a troubled slumber, I found Vesta's father waiting for me in the tiled hall. He said that his daughter awaited the presence of her lord, for, she sent me word, how did *I* know that her hand was to be given in marriage so readily, who had never spoken with her concerning it?

"That is so," I said. "How should I know?"

"Nay, have no fear on that point, Arnon, my son," said the shaven priest; "her heart hath been set on you since that night your eyes first met, and I tell you plainly that nothing could please me better than this has done. Perhaps, you see now why I would have you a priest?"

"I see no reason," I answered, stroking my chin. "I was ever keener in sword-play than in wit."

"Seemeth so," said Mitres testily. "Well, this is the wherefore of it. It is customary for the daughters of priests to marry priests, though it may at rare times be otherwise; and after the death of the low-born serf whom Vesta fancied in her folly, I swore an oath by all the gods that she should wed a priest or go husbandless to the tomb. Seest now, O wise King's counsellor?"

"Light glimmers on the way," I replied, unmoved by his sarcastic tone; "thou wouldst have me a priest so that this thing might befall as it hath done?"

"Thou hast said it," he responded, the old quiet smile coming back as he spoke. "And now to thy prize, for I'll warrant me she counts the moments till you come." And as I turned to the room where Vesta daily sat sewing, the kindly soul went on his way to the temple, light of heart. The one desire of his life was given to him, now his daughter well betrothed, for he loved her as the apple of his eye.

For myself, my heart was not so light. There was but one whom I loved, and here was I, about to wed another whom I only cared for as a friend. It is true, as the Book of the Soul says, that a man's love is more to him than a woman's is to her; for a woman will wed a man who loves her, though she returns not his affection, trusting to the fire of his passion to warm both hearts as the years go on in wedlock, but a man will seldom desire a woman he loves not, though she worship him never so deeply.

So stood I to Vesta, but I had given my word to the King, wealth and power drew me on, I could not thwart the will of my friend Mitres, and least of all could I face Vesta herself with refusal on my lips.

I thought of the saying of Unim, the priest, in the grotto of the Sacred Sleeper; I called to mind the words of Isis that I had heard in my vision in the Temple of Karnac, and saw no way but to take what joy came to me, leaving to the Spirits the task of bringing their words true.

One thing I was glad of; that was that the great temptation Isis had warned me against was to be met in Atlantis, and not here in Khem, so that this marriage with Vesta could not be of evil influence upon my fate.

So, thus cogitating, I came to where Vesta sat, and talked with her, and so winsome a maid was she, so prettily she chid my clumsiness in making love, as she thought my hesitation, that I felt recompensed for my faithlessness to my other memory, and grew to think myself a fortune-favoured man that my steps had once been led to the place of tombs near Memphis.

In our happiness—for I was ever moved by Beauty's charms, and loath to go from Beauty's side—we lost our count of time, nor was it till Mitres, stern of face but merry of eye, came to tell us that the evening meal was ready that, she all rosy red with maidenly confusion, and myself calmer than I had been for many months, we woke to the consciousness that the round of daily life was still revolving on. One thing that I was glad of after, was that I told both father and daughter of the danger that threatened from Itaska's jealousy, for I knew that now she would be my enemy beyond a doubt.

I married my fair Egyptian.

My fame spread, as the days passed, from border to border of the land, from the confines of the Bugaitai Desert to the fortified city of Syene, from Pelusium to Aphtis; wealth flowed in upon me till I had more than I knew how to rightly deal with, and night after night I sat at meat with the King and his household.

In my ships I sailed down the Sea of Weeds and into the Sea of Shari, venturing far into the trackless ocean to the east, and in the swift vessel that rode upon the waters of the Great Sea into which old Nilus empties I visited many a fragrant isle where dates, and figs, and oranges, and lemons, and citrons grow in prodigal profusion, touched keel on many shores of the great mainland to the north, and once put through the narrow strait to the west, standing out a few leagues into the heaving sea beyond, and would have sailed further, but that my crew were seized with fear, being mostly river-sailors, and I must needs return.

I rated them heartily for a set of faint-hearted fresh-water crabs as we scudded back past the giant rock to the north of the strait,* where hovered, numberless as a swarm of bees, screaming and clanging hoarsely, a cloud of flying sea-birds, black, and grey, and white. We passed the channel swifter than I had ever sailed before, for the *Seamew* was a speedy vessel, being low in the water, with high masts

* The Rock of Gibraltar.

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and rigging fashioned in dainty lines, as though she were a fairy craft that skimmed the wave like a stormy petrel.

And when we cast anchor again in the Nile I sent the cravens about their business without more ado, engaging in their stead a goodly company of deep-sea sailors from the eastern shores of the land of Khem, weather-beaten, bronze-browed seamen who had dared tempest and wreck for many years between the ports of Egypt and of Ind.

A year and a little more had gone since the banquet of which I have told, when I married my fair Egyptian at the Festival of Burning Lamps. I thought at first that it would prove a loveless link to me, but Vesta confided in me so fully, hung upon my words as though I were a god, and was withal so fair and sweet, that I came to cherish her with a quiet affection, calm enough on the surface, but deep, too, as I found when harm threatened this lovely daughter of Khem, who was mine.

Of Itaska I ceased to take heed, though, for all the glamouring pretence of joy she made at the bridal feast, I misdoubted me much of her flashing eyes and evil smile; a smile such as the syrens of the sea are said to wear when they lure luckless wanderers to their weed-grown caves.

'Twas a peaceful life I led, those twice five years I lived as Vesta's lord in Egypt, and though our union was childless—for which I have since felt glad—we grew to cherish and love each other more, albeit, at times, another face, crowned by a wealth of darker hair than my bride's, would rise before me, and with mute gesture bid me to her side. I never dwelt on the vision then, for my love for Vesta was to my love for Briseis as the full glow of a risen sun is to the paleness of a clouded moon, and it grieved me to cause a moment's pain to one who thought I lived for her alone. 'Twas pleasant, those ten eventless years, to live in the lap of luxury, powerful as a prince, more famous than any of the generals of the King, and honoured wherever I chose to go.

Thus things went with me till the ten peaceful years were nearly run, and then I noticed a coolness in the King's manner towards me that I could not reconcile with his former gratitude, while Queen Hamense was as curt and cutting in her speech to me as if I had done her a grievous wrong.

Also, a priest named Sethos, who looked ever upon my greatness with a jealous eye, grew mocking in his tone whenever he spoke of me, calling me, in derision, Arnon the Priest-Slinger, for my skill in the use of that weapon; and this, in a land where even the husbandmen use slings to frighten birds away from the vineyards, was in itself an insult.

Once I dared this Sethos to mortal combat for his insolence, but he declined—the coward—saying that it was not meet for priests to slay each other without great provocation, which he did not know that he had given; and with that, as the King upheld his plea, I had to be content.

I took counsel with Mitres at last, telling him how all things stood.

"Sharp sword, slow wit," he said; "'tis as clear as noon to me, and an evil outlook, too."

"What is the reason of it?" I asked again.

"A plague on your dulness! Canst not see the hand of Itaska in all this? See not that she has won the Queen to her side, and has taken Sethos, who grudges you your fortune, into her confidence, and that the three of them are turning the King's mind against you? 'Tis clear as noon."

"By Neith, and so 'tis!" I answered; "what would you counsel?"

"To take no heed of it, and leave the matter to me," said Mitres. "This Itaska is a cool and calculating woman, or had worked her jealous ends long since. But she cares not to strike the blow herself, and so bides her time till she can make others the tools of her vengeance. Doth Asos know of her infatuation?"

"No, nor ever will from my lips," I replied, "for he is a worthy man, and I would spare him sorrow."

"Well spoken, Arnon," said Vesta's father; "and now I will tell you what I plan. Take no heed of this secret plotting, and I will cause a watch to be set upon the movements of these enemies, so that they may be caught in their own snare. Meantime, be ever on your guard against treachery. Promise me that you will ever wear that sword I gave you when we fought in the banquet-room, for it is a mighty weapon, forged, they say, on the anvil of the gods in Amenti. *Sunderer*, 'tis named, and a sunderer shall it be, so long as he who wields it keeps a stout heart within him."

I promised him to wear it ever, for I saw that the old man loved me as a son, and then we departed to our daily tasks, I, for my part, forgetting for a time the danger that threatened.

But one day—it was the second day of the month Mesoré, the last month of the year—my fair one's father came to me with a troubled face. I questioned him concerning his unusual gloom, rallied him for his stillness, and asked where his jollity had gone, but he only shook his head dolefully.

"This is an evil world, my son," he said at length, "and it will be well for many of us when we reach the shades beyond the tomb. It hath come to this, Arnon, that thou and I must soon part."

"Why so?" I ventured, a chill striking me. "Hast news of Itaska's plotting?"

He inclined his head, saying, "Even so." Then, after a pause, "Listen, while I tell thee all.

"As was my wont," he went on, "I betook myself to the Place of Counsel as the day broke, but few came for guidance. At last, just as I thought to turn away, Sethos entered, and seeing him, I withdrew behind the purple curtain before he had time to notice that anyone was within. He seated himself in my seat—for it is his turn after mine—and waited, impatiently, it seemed to me. Presently he moved as if hearing footsteps, and soon a voice—Itaska's voice—spoke through the hollow stone. I strained my ears to listen.

"'Art alone, Sethos?' said Itaska warily.

"'Yea, speak on in safety, lady,' answered he.

"'Then I have come to say that at last I know the history of this Arnon,' said the voice exultingly.

"I heard an exclamation of surprise from Sethos at the news, and listened with all the more intent.

"'He is no son of Egypt,' the voice went on, 'but a stranger from a far-off western land. This I have from the mouth of Asos, my husband, who had it from the Slinger himself at their first meeting in the wilds of Nubia. It has cost me great trouble to make Asos speak, but it is done, and methinks we have now a weapon wherewith to bring about the downfall of this stranger who penetrates the secrets of our wisdom and takes the daughters of our priests in marriage!'

"'True, lady,' said Sethos, 'and what is now thy will?'

"'That you go to Azil, the High Priest of On, and tell him the story, while I tell it to Queen Hamense, who will inform the King, and then, when he is called to trial by the head of the nation and the head of the priesthood, it shall be yours to swear that in secret the Slinger is unfaithful to the gods and mocks at their worship and hath led Vesta, his wife, to the same mind. Then his downfall and hers is assured, and you will surely take his place.'

"Sethos, lured by the bait of gold and power, held out to him, agreed to the compact, though he asked, curiously:

"'What hast thou to gain, lady, by this deed?'

"'That is my own business,' she answered, 'see thou to thy part and take no heed of me.'

"Then she went away and presently Sethos followed. Now I ask you, Arnon, is this tale true?"

"It is," I said, "and you must see why I have told it to none but Asos."

"Yes," he returned; and for some moments we stood there, facing each other in silence, scarcely knowing how to frame the words that both knew must be spoken.

(To be continued.)

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JUMBLED STORY No. 18.] [See Page 559.

DOING THIS FEAT OF PRINTING HE PUT DOHEE.

Scene.—An old-fashioned cottage verandah, with flowering to the ground. Miss Waring, in a light summer muslin frock. honeysuckle trained over a trellis, and a flight of steps leading on a small wicker table by her side. Enter John Gray, discovered "mending," with a large basket of work standing clad in riding coat, breeches, and boots.

Jane Waring (a spinster of twenty-seven years).
John Gray (a bachelor of thirty odd).

Miss Waring: "Well, I never heard of such a shameless way of begging an invitation!"

Gray: "Does that make any difference?"

Miss Waring: "Of course!" (Gray seats himself astonished.)

Gray: "Why not let me tell you that I think you altogether objectionable in a friend, but it is hardly true, honest, and, as I said before, old-fashioned? Sometimes that kind of behaviour might not be possible, why it should be perfectly proper for me to explain how it all happened; but, as he finished up and noting her mocking expression): "You don't let me tell you what I think of you?"

Miss Waring (ignoring the compliment): "No, notwithstanding that you possess all those virtues this very minute."

Gray: "What a nice little housewife you would average twice a week for the last three months? That I believe you to be careful, industrious, and anything else in the world. Won't you believe me?"

Miss Waring: "Hardly!"

Gray (doggedly, as he rises): "Evidently I do love you! Indeed—indeed I do! Oh, tell me how "why, 'the proof of a pudding is in the eating'!"

Miss Waring (resignedly): "If it gives you any which are ordinarily stigmatised as unattractive, I can prove it?" (Miss Waring slightly shrugs her arms, and the latter was submitting to being kissed as if to bid him good-bye): "The proof of the slice of pudding."

Gray: "Did you *really* make a pudding?"

Miss Waring (without rising, or looking up from sight of the Leghorn hat.) "Let me see—you arose with the lark; but, after toying playfully with a whole subject of conventionalisms, and find out, if a good manager—in short, everything that the old-fashioned books, you know; and you impress what I have been doing this morning."

Gray (with one foot on the steps leading to the kitchen and made a pudding, which is being boiled deliberately): "Yes—that I love you."

Miss Waring: "How can I prove it, then?"

Gray: "Why—why—you *must* believe me! I do not know how to show it, but I love you more than I find you charming? Why not let me tell the subject."

Miss Waring (looks at him more kindly; then, it should be very improper for me to dine with you, until it is time to go home, in a lazy sort of way, with the lark—that is the way girls used to do in copy-books say a woman should be? And, the thing I should expect from—from my lover."

Gray: "Then why try to correct me? Why not ride over to see the beloved object whenever there gone to town, and will not be back until after invitation to dine?"

Miss Waring: "Mr. Gray!"

Gray: "The eating."

Miss Waring: "I will not have any discussion on pleasure."

Gray: "What am I to do? It's too late to go dinner."

Miss Waring: "You are most incorrigible."

Gray: "Then I am not to be invited to dinner?"

Miss Waring (smiling): "I might send you out a light and delicate breakfast—What! No again? Have I not stayed? Have I not been unconscionably to sit here and talk with you all alone, or to go off continually in the room?"

Gray: "But why not? Why not discuss the shoulders.) "Have I not ridden over here on an flat basket over your arm, and sallied forth into the verandah): "Good-morning, Miss Waring."

Miss Waring: "Most certainly not. Mother has her work): "Good-morning, Mr. Gray. Have you else from her childhood up.)

Gray: "Yes. May I sit down?"

Miss Waring: "Does that mean you expect an garden to pluck flowers—the prettiest flower of them too, by Jove! What a treasure you will be to believe me?"

Gray: "Let me see." (Gazes about, and catches in a most complicated piece of darning. Gray slightly amused): "Are you quite sure about it?"

Miss Waring: "No!"

Gray: "Prove"—(then, with a happy thought)—Why, this will never do! After a heavy meal, you is nowhere else to go. Then to hang about the place not opening your lips for half-hours together. "No? Well, that is immaterial—you didn't arise the lark, then." (Miss Waring shakes her head.) pudding, Mr. Gray, is in——"

Miss Waring: "No; I will not discuss it."

Gray: "Does that mean I have got it?"

(She drops her work into her lap, and gazes at me as being distinctly old-fashioned—you arose with the proverb, John Gray held Jane Waring in his all."

Gray (innocently): "Quite sure." (Then, looking on steps.) "I do not believe that you can guess nothing half so romantic. I went down into the back to Woodlands."

Miss Waring (looking more astonished, and been riding?"

Gray: "Yes."

Miss Waring: "And is that your idea of love? To him, half frightened, half pleased, and wholly by him as if she had been accustomed to do nothing dull?"

Gray: "I don't believe it."

Miss Waring: "I *really* did."

Gray (who is looking at the toe of his boot, which suddenly notices the nature of her work.) "Darning, constructively alone, but with your servants and walk with you all alone in the woods, and yet put on your sun-bonnet and gauntlets, hung a big, make!" (Miss Waring becomes intensely occupied with a gleam of mischief in her eyes, as she also rises somebody, Miss Waring!"

(It would be quite impossible, in a stage direction, he flicks with his crop, while he adds very talking when you are so inclined, and frequently you that—that I love you?"

Gertrude Warner.

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By George Manville Fenn.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Another Shattered Idol.

"Yes, mad—mad with love—mad with passion—maddened by being a constant witness of that man's brutality to you. Olive, my own, my darling, listen to me. Don't turn away like this. You know—you must have known—how I loved you, and that I have waited and striven to do all that man could do to honour him and his love for you; but the passion has grown too strong. Had he been a true husband to you I should never have uttered a word; but, knowing what I do—the neglect, the cruelty, the patient forgiveness, and the repeated insults thrown in your face—I—I—I say—who loved you from the first, should have been more than man if I had not spoken as I have."

"Ah!" she cried at last, as she struggled free and tried to fly from the room.

But Murray caught her hands again, and in her desperation she backed away from him, till with a sudden snatch she tore them away again.

"Oh!" she cried, "is there no such thing as faith and truth in this unhappy world? You—you whom I have trusted and believed in as a true gentleman, my father's, my husband's friend—the man to whom I have always turned as if he were my brother—you speak to me like this—these cruel words. Oh, you must be mad—you must be mad!"

"Yes," he cried, fiercely now, "mad; but no, you cannot be so heartless, so cruel, as not to listen to me. Olive, dearest, think, think of all this weary past, this hideous time of suffering for us both. What right have you to go on letting this man blast your life and force you to submit to his infamies? Love! Pah! he never loved you. A miserable, despicable *roué*, who, with his wretched, worldly-minded mother, had but one thought, your father's money, while he, poor trusting, loving heart, believed he was working for your benefit, proud to see the child he loved so well worshipped, titled, and the honoured of all. I tell you he has told me all this again and again."

"Yes," cried Olive wildly, "told you—the man he believed to be his friend. What would he say now if he could hear that same man tempting his helpless, despairing child to forget her honour, duty, to her husband. Oh, it is an infamy! You do not know what you are saying. It is all impossible from you."

"Impossible! Duty to your husband!—honour! What duty do you owe him who has broken all ties to you again and again?"

"I am a woman, sir—Lord Braetoun's wife. If he has sinned against me, it is against me alone."

"No—no—against all who love you."

"I say against me and my father, sir; and if we forgive him, and he repents, what is that to you?"

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"You have forgiven him," cried Murray passionately; "where is his repentance? Whose is the infamy—mine, or his?"

"Yours, for he trusted you. I, his wife, trusted you. My father has a hundred times said to me: 'If I am not near, and you are in trouble, there is Murray. You can trust him as you would me. He is the very soul of honour.' And, alas! that I should have to say it—that another idol I have worshipped should be cast down before me—where is that honour now?"

"Olive, for God's sake, have mercy," he cried, as he, as if to illustrate her words, threw himself at her feet, and caught her dress in his hands to press the hem against his lips.

"Yes, you are mad—you must be," she said softly now. "It cannot be you who spoke; it is too cruel—too horrible. I cannot crush you with bitter words. Your own heart will punish you enough. Please, go now, and let me think only of the friend I trusted, whom we all thought the soul of honour and truth."

"Olive," he cried piteously, "are those words from your heart? Is it you speaking now?"

"It is Lord Braetoun's wife, sir. I am a weak, helpless woman—alone with you here. My husband, who should be my defender, lies above us, stricken almost unto death. As a gentleman, sir, I ask you to leave me now, and go. We must never meet again."

"Olive, for mercy's sake, have pity on me!" he groaned, with his hands outstretched.

"I cannot have mercy. I cannot pardon you now. Once more, pray go."

He rose to his feet, and stood with one hand pressed to his forehead, gazing at her wildly, as if hardly able to grasp her words. But her attitude spoke volumes. There were pity—despair—agony—sorrow, all in the wild, dilated eyes which met his; while her left hand was outstretched toward the door, her right resting upon her breast, as if it were the only protector left.

And so they stood facing each other for some minutes. His lips moved again and again, but no sound came, and when he did speak his face seemed utterly changed, and his features were drawn and haggard.

"Go?" he said. "Go?" And he took a step or two toward the door. "Yes, go. My punishment for loving as man could hardly have loved before. Yes, go out into the cold, empty world alone."

There was a pathetic misery in his way of uttering the simple words that made his hearer tremble, and a look of pity beamed in her eyes; but they grew stern again, and did not shrink from his for a moment, as utterly crushed and humbled, he literally staggered from the room and down the stairs, supporting himself by the balustrade.

The calm, stern look left Olive's eyes the moment the door

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Closed and she stood listening for a few moments; then gliding out, she darted upstairs, closed and locked the door behind her, and tottered to the bedside, where she fell upon her knees, caught Braetoun's hand in hers, and drew his arm about her neck, a violent hysterical fit of sobbing seizing her. But she felt safe, and by degrees the paroxysm passed away, to give place to a sense of loneliness and misery such as she had never suffered before.

And there she knelt till the rising sun shone through the window, but all looked to her cold and desolate, for another idol had been rudely broken, and lay shivered at her feet.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

His Straight Course.

Olivé's experience of her husband's malady and the way in which it acted upon his shattered nerves was sufficient now to assure her that he was better that next morning; but she knew that much had to be done, and as she watched by his side her trouble and agitation increased.

For her position was terrible. She had no faith whatever in the result of calling in another medical man, for, however clever he might be, he would not have the slightest experience of Braetoun's constitution, and, though he might treat him admirably, the risk was terrible.

What should she do?

The nervous excitement was maddening, and the strain seemed more than she could bear. The fight, as it were, for life when Braetoun's delirium was at its height; the horror of Murray's declaration; and now the position in which she found herself.

"It is more than I can bear—it is more than I can bear," she sobbed, as she walked softly up and down the room, wringing her hands.

What to do?

If she sent for her father, his first question would be: "Why is not Murray here?" And then she must explain—tell him of the wild, excited declaration. She could not tell him—she dared not. It would be cruel to herself, a ten times greater cruelty to one who had saved her husband's life again and again. It was horrible, criminal, but how could she sit in judgment upon a man whose crime was that he loved her?

The blood flushed to her temples with the shame of the thought, and yet there was a feeling of misery and despair as she felt that they must never meet again, that she could never more frankly take the hand of the man for whom, in all innocence, she had felt a warm affection—the love she would have felt for a brother, even as her father looked upon him and treated him just as if he were a son. No, she could never look him in the face again, she told herself. It was an insult—an outrage. He must have been lost to all sense of respect and reverence for her—he must have been mad.

And for this to come at such a time, when she was so lonely, when she longed so for the help and counsel of someone whom she could trust. Her father? Yes, but she could not talk to him about her unhappy life; far less to Lady Braetoun.

Why, she ought to send for her at once, and tell her of her son's fresh attack; but how could she, when the first question would be: "Why is not Dr. Murray here?"

These thoughts rushed together through her brain till it grew chaotic; and there were moments when she felt that she must go mad. She was hedged in by difficulties, a very thorny tangle, out of which there appeared but one way of escape, and that was to send for Murray, and treat the scene of the past night as if it had never occurred.

"Impossible—impossible!" she moaned, as she flung herself upon her knees by the bedside, the blood once more flushing her temples, and the angry feeling of shame and indignation mastering everything else.

"How dared he?" she thought. What would he think if she sent for him? He would look upon her as weak, and ready to condone his offence.

It was impossible. Another medical man must be summoned at all hazards, and if—if—"Oh, Roderick," she moaned, "what shall I do? It is your honour, your life, for which I am fighting; tell me what to do? I want to love you dearly, my own husband. I forgive you the past. Take me to your heart and guard me. What have I done that you should have treated me so? Weak, inexperienced, I know all that, but I wanted to love you, dear. And now I dare not send for another; it is like risking your life. I dare not send for him; it is as if I were risking your honour. Roderick, dearest, I am your own weak, foolish wife; tell me, tell me what I am to do?"

She had taken his hand to press it to her burning forehead, and her softly-breathed words were full of tender love and reverence; but there was no reply. He lay in a state of utter insensibility more than sleep, and the black despair swept over the unhappy woman like a wave, as she moaned again and again:

"What shall I do—what shall I do?"

"I beg you pardon, my lady," said a soft voice at her side. "I'm afraid I've neglected you; but we were all so tired last night. How is his lordship this morning?"

Olive started to her feet, scarlet and then ghastly white, for the horrible thought flashed through her that the words she had uttered had been heard.

But the woman's face was grave enough, and there was no sparkle of curiosity in her eyes, only pity, for she knew well enough her lady's troubles—troubles which were pretty well canvassed all through the house—and she had not heard a word.

"Very, very ill, Melson," said Olive sadly; "but the terrible paroxysms are over. Oh, thank you. It was very good and thoughtful of you to bring that, but I could not touch anything."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, my lady," said the maid with quiet decision, as she set down the little tray of tea and toast which she had brought; "but you must, please. I went into the drawing-room, and you hadn't touched anything there, though the tea had been made. I don't believe you have had anything since yesterday."

Olive shivered as the maid's words brought up the scene in the night, and she saw once more Murray's wild eyes, listened to his passionate words; and she closed her eyes to shut out the horror.

"I thought so," said her maid to herself, and Olive started and uttered a wild cry, for she felt arms about her, and in her strangely exalted nervous state she gazed wildly in the eyes which looked into hers, and began to struggle, but resigned herself directly to the hands which lowered her into a lounge.

"I thought—I thought——" she faltered.

"Yes, my lady; it's because you are so nervous and overdone," said the maid, who hurried to the dressing-table and then bathed the agitated face with eau-de-Cologne before pouring out some tea. "Now try and drink this, my lady. Please, please."

Olive took the cup without a word, and sat back sipping a little from time to time, while her maid went softly about, arranging the disordered room, and glancing now and again at the cadaverous face upon the pillow.

Each glance she gave, though, was longer, and her brows contracted, while a look of anxiety deepened in her eyes, but she refrained from speaking till she had almost forced Olive to finish the tea. Then, as she took the cup away and began to bathe her temples again, she said gently:

"I don't want to alarm you, my lady, but his lordship's face looks very, very strange."

Olive uttered a cry, sprang up, and dragged back the curtain, as she bent over the pillow and then hurriedly felt Braetoun's temples, heart, and hands.

"I—I don't think he is different—he has been like this for some hours," she faltered.

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"Yes, my lady? But he looks very bad. Oughtn't you to send for Doctor Murray?"

Olive's eyes dilated with horror, and she stood panting and trembling.

"No, no," she said in a hoarse whisper; "impossible! I——"

"I didn't mean to frighten you, my lady. You know best. You've seen so much more of his lordship when he has had these fits—but I thought I ought to speak."

Olive's eyes seemed fixed upon the speaker as if she were unable to turn away, while the agitation in her brain was extreme, and she went quickly through all the agonising struggle again.

At last, though, her looks were so wild that the maid caught her arm and shook her.

"Oh, my lady, my lady," she cried, "don't look like that; you frighten me."

Olive uttered a moan, and turned to the bed again, to see what struck her as being a terrible change in the ghastly countenance, and she flung herself upon her knees.

"He's dying—he's dying," she wailed. "Fetch Doctor Murray. Go yourself, and tell him I beg and pray of him to come—for God's sake to come back with you at once, and——"

The words froze upon her lips, and she turned slowly round, white as marble now, conscious that somebody had thrust the maid aside on hearing her words.

"I am here, Lady Braetoun: has there been some change?"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Father and Child.

Olive's lips parted as she gazed in the dark, questioning eyes which met hers, but no words came. She could only point to the bed, and Murray threw back blind and curtain and bent over the patient, while, with a sigh of relief, Olive threw herself into the arms extended to her, as she saw that someone else was present, someone who had followed Murray into the room.

"Oh, father! dear father!" she moaned, as she clung to him. "Thank God you are here!"

"My poor, poor darling," whispered Emsworth, "are you to always suffer like this? I ought to have been told. Murray came to me at six, and roused me up. He said he was coming on here, and he told me about how bad Braetoun had been. He wished me to come with him. He said he was here till four. What a good fellow he is!"

"What a good fellow he is!" seemed to echo in Olive's breast, and, in spite of all, her resentment was for the moment somewhat quelled as she waited, panting, to hear him speak; but she shuddered and trembled, for the thought came, as if to crush her and make the shield of none effect: "He must have heard every word you said—your message praying him to come back."

There was some relief for her directly. Murray turned away from the bed, and said in short, decisive tones:

"He looks very bad, Lady Braetoun, but you need not feel alarmed. He was sure to turn like this. He must have a couple of nurses this time—one for day, and the other to relieve her at night."

"I shall"—began Olive hastily.

"Excuse me, Lady Braetoun," said Murray coldly; "it would be better not. Lord Braetoun needs the calm, unemotional nursing of a couple of trained persons. I should prefer that, if you please."

She did not speak, but her heart beat fast. Was this the same man as he who had addressed her in those words of passion in the night?

Even then she would gladly have freed herself from his presence, but she knew that it was impossible.

"I was afraid, from what you said, that matters would be worse," said Emsworth, with a sigh.

"They could not well be, Mr. Emsworth," said Murray. "He will get over this, and be about again; but these fits are weakening, and each one grows stronger. It is a pity. He has it in his own hands, not to enjoy good health, but to avoid these attacks. If he will bring them on by his folly, he must suffer. There, you must excuse me now."

"But Braetoun — what about him?" said Emsworth anxiously.

"I will come in and see him last thing to-night. Will you be here, so as to have the last report?"

"Yes—no. Come and dine with me, and we will come on together."

"Not to-night, Mr. Emsworth," said Murray coldly. "I will call at the institution, and send on the nurses, or at all events one. I will try and send Nurse Jennett for the night duty, if she is not engaged."

"Then you do not think that there is immediate danger?" said Emsworth quickly.

"No, there is none," said Murray abruptly. "He looks very bad, but his stupor will gradually give way to a very long sleep, and then probably he will wake in his right mind. Good-morning, Lady Braetoun," he added coldly, but without extending his hand. "Will you come down with me, Mr. Emsworth?"

He bowed, and left the room, the stern, firm physician, and Emsworth followed humbly behind, impressed by him, but not reading, as his daughter read, the firm, hard fight he had fought over self, and apparently to win.

She sighed, and waited anxiously for her father's return, ready to question him with her eyes.

"Yes, gone," he said. "Ah, my darling, if I could only take you back home with me! But what a man Murray is! I never felt so much respect for him before."

Olive was looking at him with her eyes full of the resentment she felt, but he did not notice it, and went on.

"We have been fortunate to find such a friend, and in the future, my dear, when I'm taken away, I can go feeling that I leave my affairs in the hands of a just steward, who will watch over your interests, and be ready to protect you, come what may."

"Father, father!" whispered Olive, as she buried her face in his breast; "don't, don't; you can't tell what agony you are giving me. You'll break my heart."

"My own darling!" he cried. "Well, well, I'll never talk to you like that again. But it is the truth, pet. I'm getting an old man, now, and work and worry, and failures of plans, and not seeing you as happy as I could wish, have told upon me. There, I won't die yet, though."

"Father, father!" whispered Olive, as she knelt before him and laid her hands upon his breast, "don't talk of going. I want you always to think of me, not as Lady Braetoun and Roderick's wife, but as your own little girl, who used to be so happy with you, and whom you used to pet and spoil. Hah!" she sighed, nestling to him as his strong arms clasped her; "like that—like that. I feel so safe and happy now. Yes, stay with me; why not come and stay with me always?"

"Eh? Stay with you always? I should only just like to. But no, no, no, it wouldn't do, my dear. There's someone else to study, someone else who wouldn't like me to stay here. And besides, I'm a very hard, harsh, disagreeable old man, and soon put out of temper; and when sometimes I saw little things that I didn't like I'm afraid I should be showing my teeth, and then somebody else would be showing his teeth, and there would be a fight, and your father would get the worst of it—a foolish old dog for interfering in another dog's kennel!"

"Oh, father, father!" sighed Olive.

"And oh, Olive, Olive!" sighed the old man; "things are best as they are. I mustn't quarrel and find fault, whatever I see, and I mustn't come and live with you, but I may visit you as often as I like, eh? And, yes, we'll have good times together after all, just as we used, and you must get Murray here as often as you can."

"No, no," she cried quickly.

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"Eh? Well, then, we will not have him to come between us, and make us think of physic. You trust me, my pet; I'll come as often as I can, and make you feel safe and happy. There, now, a hot breakfast will do us both good. Come, wipe your pretty eyes, and let's have a smile. Braetoun's very ill, and it was all very dreadful, but you know he is getting better, or Murray wouldn't have taken it so coolly and been so cross. Enough to make him, after a long day with patients, to be kept up all night by a man who has been drinking himself mad. All right; I won't say another word about it. Fried sole for me, my pet, if it can be had. If not, I'll have an omelet."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" said Emsworth, as he went home an hour later, "he'll end by making her loathe him. I believe it's begun now, or she wouldn't beg of me to stay with her, and cling to me, and talk of feeling safe in my arms. Married so short a time, too. There's a look in her eyes I don't like. She's no longer a girl, but a woman—a thoughtful woman, and it's just as if something fresh were waking up in her brain. No, I don't like the look in her eyes, and if he don't mind he will some day wake to the fact that he has gone too far."

CHAPTER XL.

Murray Has a Telegram.

Olive was seated one afternoon alone in her despair, dwelling upon her position, and asking herself whether she was wanting in any way as to her duty toward her husband.

He had pretty well recovered from his last attack, but his manner toward her grew daily more cold and distant.

Was she cold and distant to him? she asked herself. She thought not; but by slow degrees it dawned upon her that, in spite of all her efforts, she did not feel the same to him as of old. And how she had tried to be unaltered, ceaseless in her efforts to cheer him when he suffered from the terrible fits of depression that came over him, begging him to take her to some place of amusement, in the hope that it would divert his thoughts!

At times, too, when she would gladly have shut herself up in her chamber to sit and sob, reading to him, going to the piano to sing one of his favourite ballads, and making one brave fight to ignore the past, so as to teach him that her love was unchanged.

On one occasion Olive's lips had parted to tell her husband all, but it was months since that terrible scene in the drawing-room, and Murray's manner to her had undergone a complete change.

It was the following of his conduct the next morning; and when he came to attend Braetoun it was always the stern medical man who addressed her, while he hurried away as soon as he could.

Hence she arrested the words that struggled to escape her lips, and told herself that the time was gone by for speaking—confessing, she called it. It had been impossible for nearly a month after, in consequence of Braetoun's state of health, and she felt that now it was madness to revive the trouble and cause enmity between her husband and him to whom he owed his life.

She was thinking of that and similar scenes on this particular afternoon. She was in lower spirits than usual, for the feeling was growing stronger that in spite of all her efforts she could never wean her husband from his old life.

Some day repentance might come, and then——no, the old girlish love never could return, but she prayed for help to do her duty as his wife.

Something more than ordinary was wrong, and she trembled for fear that Braetoun might have another of his outbreaks. She dared not ask him what was the matter—old experience had taught her that she must not question him—but she could pretty well tell from his eager examination of the newspapers, the telegrams he received, and the constant reference to his pocket-book, that the mental trouble was caused by his turf transactions.

He had gone out that morning soon after breakfast, looking more than usually careworn and haggard; and when she had spoken affectionately, asking him if he would not lie down for an hour first, he turned upon her angrily, and told her to mind her own business.

"It is of no use," she sighed, for perhaps the thousandth time; "he never liked me; it has all been one great mistake."

The door opened, and the servant announced Dr. Murray; and for the first time since the night of his mad declaration they were face to face, alone.

In spite of her self-control, Olive started, and the blood suffused her face, and then retreated to her heart, which began to beat wildly, as she motioned the visitor to a chair, trembling for fear that he should notice her agitation.

But she might have known that he would in the quick comprehensive glance he directed at her, with eyes whose study it had been for years to read the faces of those he saw.

"I am sorry to have to come," he said; and his tones brought relief to her directly, and she felt that she had nothing to fear.

The feeling was momentary. She had been thinking of herself, but the visitor's words must refer to someone else. Something was wrong—Roderick—some sudden seizure?

She sprang to her feet with a faint cry; the room began to glide round, as the horrible deathly sensation of faintness began to creep over her, till she was conscious that Murray had sprung forward.

His touch was galvanic; a wave of strength swept through her, and she recovered herself, repulsing him, and her eyes flashed as he drew back, slightly shrugging his shoulders, and his face looked hard as steel.

"It has gone now," she said, as she clutched the back of a chair. "Tell me the truth. I'll try and bear it. Where is he?"

"I was about to ask you that question, Lady Braetoun."

"What? My husband—is he ill?"

"I presume so by your telegram," said Murray, drawing a paper from his breast, and reading: 'Very bad. Come on at once.—Braetoun.' You sent this?"

"I? No!" cried Olive excitedly. "Roderick went out at eleven. Then he has been taken ill somewhere, and sent the message himself. Is there no address?"

"None. The name was considered enough, I suppose."

"Too ill to think," cried Olive wildly. "Oh, Doctor Murray, what shall we do?"

The hard look faded from his face, and her distress evoked his pity and compassion, while he felt a strange emotion as her tones told him that she was appealing to him once more for help—as of old.

It was all momentary, passing like a flash, and her eyes fell upon the telegram.

"Ah, yes," she cried, for mutual sympathy directed her thoughts in the same channel as his.

The postmark would show whence it was sent, and, perhaps, afford some clue.

But as she made a quick movement to snatch the paper from his hand, he crushed it angrily, and stood frowning.

(To be continued.)

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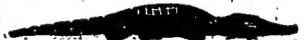

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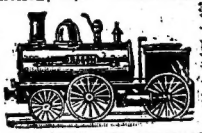

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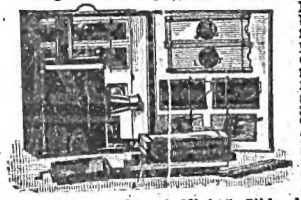

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